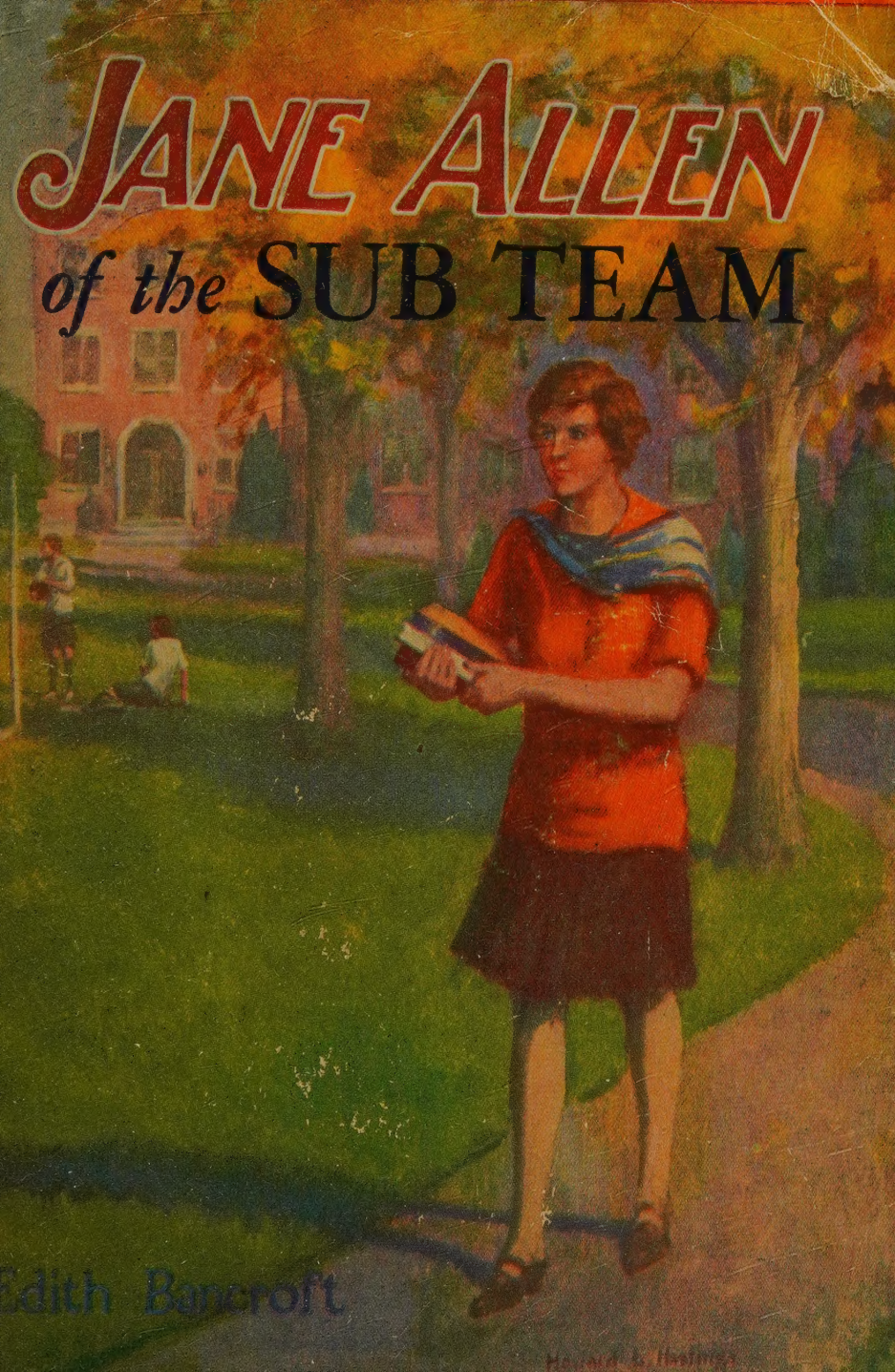
JANE ALLEN
of the SUB TEAM



Edith Bancroft

JANE ALLEN OF THE SUB TEAM

By Edith Bancroft

From her home on the Montana range, Jane enters the freshman class of Wellington College in the East. She bitterly resents being sent to school, is ungracious to the girls who try to be kind to her, and is harshly criticized. She does make a few close friends, and when she enters the sport at the last minute turns out to be a fine basketball player. She becomes more genial, makes the team and plays in the deciding game for the class championship.

JANE ALLEN BOOKS

Jane Allen of the Sub Team
Jane Allen, Right Guard
Jane Allen, Center

Uniform with this Volume

Jane spent the afternoon visiting her favorite haunts.
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Jane Allen of the Sub-Team

By
Edith Bancroft

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CHAPTER I

BREAKING THE NEWS TO JANE

"AUNT MARY! Aunt Mary!" There was a faint touch of impatience in the clear, high tones. A tall girl in riding clothes ran down the stairs two at a time, lifting up her voice in impetuous quest of her aunt as she descended. At the foot of the stairway she paused for an instant to poke her head between the silken portières that hung in the wide doorway at one side of the square, roomy hall.

"Not here," she commented as she entered the large, comfortable living room. Pausing before a convenient mirror, she set the smart little black riding hat she carried in one hand on a head running over with russet curls, and briefly viewed

the effect. But her mind was not on the correct set of her hat, for an instant later she was out in the hall again. This time she tried the dining room, which lay directly opposite the apartment she had just quitted.

"Oh, dear! How provoking. Where can she be, I wonder? She isn't upstairs, I'm sure. Aunt Ma—ry!" Jane Allen's voice was again raised in a penetrating call.

"Here, my dear," came a resigned response from the direction of the broad veranda that extended half-way round "El Capitan," the rambling ranch house which Jane Allen called home. "I heard you the first time you called. If you hadn't been so noisy you would have heard me answer."

"Now, my dearly beloved aunt, you know I'm not noisy. I'm the quietest person in Montana, except when I can't find you," laughed Jane as she swooped down upon the slender, dark-haired woman reclining in the willow rocker, and gave her a resounding kiss. "Besides, you can't blame me if I'm just a little bit noisy. Do you know what day this is? Of course you do. It's my birthday. I'm sixteen years old this glorious September morning."

"I haven't forgotten it," returned her aunt,

slipping her arm about the tall, slender girl at her side and smiling up into the radiant face bent upon her. "I'll prove that to you at breakfast. You'd better put off your ride if you are anxious to know what I have for you."

"Can't do it, Auntie. I'm slowly dying of curiosity to see what's in all those packages at my place. I poked my head in the dining room and saw them, but I promised Dad I'd meet him at Coyote Rock and ride back to the house with him. He had to go down that way early this morning. We made the date last night, and now I'm off to meet him. I just wanted to tell you, so you'd know where I was. I'll be back with him in half an hour. Look! Pedro is bringing up Firefly now. Good-bye, I'll see you later."

Jane was off down the drive and across the lawn to meet the Mexican groom who was approaching, leading a spirited horse. Its black, shining coat was unrelieved by a single white hair.

"Isn't he wonderful, Pedro?" she exclaimed rapturously, patting the beautiful animal's glistening neck.

"Si, señorita," nodded the man, his dark eyes lighting with appreciation of the horse. "In all Montana there is none like him."

"Do you hear that, Firefly? But you mustn't be vain and put on airs. 'Handsome is as handsome does,' you know. You must prove our good opinion of you by taking me to Dad in a hurry."

With an agile spring Jane was in the saddle. The next instant she was off like the wind, one loose auburn curl flying out behind her, her changeful face alight with sheer joy of living.

Her aunt gazed after the flying figure, an expression of sadness in her fine dark eyes. "Poor Jane," she murmured. "It's too bad to take her away from all this. She's as much a part of this western land as the mountains themselves. I'm afraid she will take it hard. I'm glad I don't have to tell her."

Oblivious to what the future might hold in store for her, Jane was riding along her way at whirlwind speed, her alert eyes scanning the trail, every inch of which she knew by heart. Suddenly she raised herself in her saddle and emitted a long, clear call. Far ahead she had spied a solitary horseman.

"It's Dad, Firefly. Hurry along, good old boy," she urged joyfully. She began a vigorous waving of one hand at the figure ahead. The man on the horse waved his sombrero with a vigor equal to her own.

"Good girl!" he called out as she neared him. "You are here on the dot. Many happy returns of the day."

With the skill of a cowboy Jane brought Firefly to a standstill beside the big bay horse her father rode. Leaning over, she pressed her soft lips to his cheek. "Thank you, Daddy dear. I'm glad, glad, glad to be alive and sixteen. I'm really growing agéd, yet it seems only about three days since I was eight and you gave me Benny, my first pony. I've had eight happy returns of the day since then and each one has been nicer than the last. I'm going to have a lot more of them here on the ranch, keeping house for you. I'm old enough now to take proper care of you, and you know you need a guardian."

A faint shadow darkened the clean-cut, sunburned face of Henry Allen. He cast a swift, half-apprehensive glance at the radiant girl beside him. Then, as one who has an extremely unpleasant duty to perform and decides to get it over with, he said: "Jane, girl, I've something to tell you this morning that I'm afraid you are not going to like to hear."

"Now what have I done?" demanded Jane, her gray eyes twinkling. "Is it about those friends of Aunt Mary's that I ran away from the other

day? You know I can't endure those stiff Eastern people from the Double U Ranch who come here to see her. They think I'm a tomboy, and besides, they ask the most foolish questions. Can't you tell me some other time, Dad? This is my birthday, so you see——"

"That is just the reason why I must tell you, Janie," interrupted her father soberly. "Before your mother died, dear——"

"Wait a minute, Dad." The ruddy color had faded from Jane's cheeks at the mention of the mother who had died when she was twelve years old. Now she slid from her horse and, dropping down upon a convenient boulder just large enough to comfortably seat two persons, beckoned her father to her. "Sit here," she directed solemnly. "Put your arm around me. I know it must be serious or you wouldn't speak—of—of Mother." There was a little catch in her voice.

Her father obeyed. For a moment he stared across the sunlit space in silence, one arm about Jane, her hand in his. Their common loss was one that grew rather than lessened with the passing years. Father and daughter adored the memory of the woman who had been all in all to them.

"Go ahead, Dad, I'm listening." Jane braced herself bravely for what was to come.

"Before your mother died," repeated Henry Allen, "we had a long talk about you. She thought of your welfare until—until the last. She wished you to build up a strong, healthy body, little girl, but she was anxious that you should be properly educated, too. She could look ahead and see that there would come a time when the things of the ranch wouldn't completely fill your life, so she made me promise to look after your education——"

"And you *have,* dear," interrupted Jane eagerly. "I know as much now as Miss Evans does. Why, she said just the other day that I was well enough prepared to pass the entrance examinations to any college. No, thank you, though. Colleges are not for me. I'm going to begin to take care of you now, and learn how to manage a ranch, and lots of things. I know what you are going to say. I can guess. You are going to tell me that I needn't have Miss Evans after to-day, or learn any more lessons. You think it will make me feel dreadfully to lose her. Of course, I shall miss her. She's an old dear, but I can live if I don't have a governess. There! Did I guess right?" Jane rubbed her soft cheek against her father's broad shoulder and snuggled more comfortably into the shelter of his arm.

"I'm afraid you didn't, girl of mine."

Something in her father's tone caused Jane to sit up with a jerk. She cast a curious glance at his grave face. "Tell me at once then, Dad," she commanded sharply.

"Your mother was educated at Wellington Seminary, Jane," he began, "and it was her wish that you should be sent there to finish your education when you were sixteen, provided you were prepared. From what you've just told me, and from what Miss Evans has reported of your progress in your studies, you are ready to enter the school. And you're sixteen to-day, so, girl of mine, the time has come when you must leave Dad and the ranch for a little while and carry out your mother's wishes."

"Oh!" burst in horrified tones from Jane's lips. "You don't mean it, Dad! You know you don't. You wouldn't send me away to live in a miserable seminary! You know I hate the East." She sprang to her feet in a sudden passion of anger and dismay. "Why, I couldn't stand it! I'd die. What could I do without you and Aunt Mary and Firefly—my beauty, my pet! I won't go a step—so there!"

From babyhood it had been tacitly acknowledged by those who knew her best that Jane

Allen had a temper. It was not an ordinary temper that manifested itself at trifles. But when it did flash forth it came with all the force and fury that perfect physical health and strength could put into it.

"I tell you, I won't go!" she stormed. "I can't help it if Mother did wish it. If—if—she had lived she would have understood and not—not—made you promise to send me away. I've read about seminaries, and they are horrible, stiff places where the girls aren't allowed hardly to breathe. I know I'd die if I were shut up in one of them. It's cruel in you to spoil my birthday like this. I thought I was going to have such a happy day and it's ended in *this* before it fairly began. But I won't go and you can't make me!"

With this proclamation of defiance, Jane whirled about and, running to where Firefly patiently waited, swung herself into her saddle and swept down the trail at a breakneck speed, leaving her father to stare after her with troubled eyes.

CHAPTER II

FIGHTING THINGS OUT

JANE never remembered the details of that dreadful ride back to El Capitan. For her the glory of the morning had vanished into the blackest night. She galloped down the well-worn trail, consumed with furious, unseeing rage against the fate that had overtaken her on that day of all days, to which she had looked forward with such lively anticipation. At the very moment when the future promised so brightly, she was to be taken away from her glorious Western world and packed off to school. A seminary, too! Jane shuddered at the thought.

Firefly's sturdy feet pounding the drive brought her to a realization that she had reached home. She did not even recollect passing through the gateway into the drive. As she reined up at the stable, Pedro ran out. His dark face showed

no surprise at Jane's sudden return. He was quite used to her moods.

"Take him, Pedro." Jane flung herself from Firefly and hurried toward the ranch house. Her one idea was to gain the shelter of her room, where she could fight things out undisturbed. Since her childhood days her room had always been her haven of refuge; her last stand in times of stress.

"Jane, dear, breakfast is waiting," called her aunt from the dining room as she caught sight of the fleeing figure.

"Don't want any," came the muffled response. Then followed a rush of feet on the stairs and the resounding slam of a door.

Miss Mary Allen's placid face wore an "I expected-as-much" expression. She sighed, then rising from her place at the foot of the breakfast table, walked to the window. She guessed what had taken place. "Henry won't be long behind her," she murmured.

Her prediction was soon verified. From her post at the window she saw her brother ride up the drive and in the direction of the stable at a rate of speed second only to Jane's whirlwind method. Resuming her seat at the table, she waited to hear what she had already surmised.

"Where is she?" was Henry Allen's quick question, as he entered the dining room. "Poor Janie! I'm afraid I've spoiled her day."

"I'm afraid we have spoiled *her,*" retorted his sister, with a deprecating shake of her head. "She is in her room. I heard her bang the door. You know what that means."

Jane's father smiled whimsically. "Poor Janie," he repeated. "It is pretty hard on her. Don't you think so, Mary?"

"Yes," nodded his sister, "but still, we must remember that it is for her good and that—Dorothy wished it. The fact of the matter is, Henry, that Jane has been outrageously spoiled. She rules both you and me with a high hand. Sending her East will be the best thing that can possibly happen to her. She knows nothing of girls of her own age, or how delightful their companionship can be. I suppose she went all to pieces when you told her."

"Yes, even the fact that it was her mother's idea didn't seem to count," returned Mr. Allen soberly. "Perhaps, after all, Mary, it would be best to——"

"Let Jane have her own way and grow up a hoyden," interrupted his sister. "I expected you would weaken. You forget Dorothy——"

"Don't say that, Mary!" An expression of infinite sadness sprang into Henry Allen's dark eyes. "I can never forget."

"Forgive me, Henry. I was only reminding you of your promise. Dorothy understood Jane far better than you or I. She planned wisely for her future."

"I know it," sighed Mr. Allen. "Still, I feel like a brute. She said I was cruel and that she'd die if she were shut up in a seminary."

"But Wellington is not a seminary, nor has it been for a number of years," argued Miss Allen. "It's an up-to-date college now and one of the finest institutions of learning in the East. Does Jane know that?"

"She knows nothing whatever about it. She didn't give me time for explanations. Shall I storm the citadel and bring her down to breakfast? She hasn't looked at her presents."

"No; leave her alone to fight it out," was Miss Allen's wise counsel. "Once she realizes that she is defying her mother's last wish she will give in." Miss Allen busied herself with the coffee urn, while her brother took up a letter from the pile of mail at one side of his plate and opened it.

Locked in her room, face downward on her bed, Jane Allen was sobbing out her resentment

and grief. It was all too monstrous to be borne. She could never endure it. Once she was imprisoned in that hateful seminary she would die. She didn't wish to live, at any rate. Her father and Aunt Mary would be sorry. She pictured herself slowly dying of grief and homesick longing. Some day, soon after they had sent her away, a telegram would come to El Capitan. Her father would open it and read, "Come at once. Your daughter died last night." Then, when it was too late, they would understand. Jane wept afresh in sheer sorrow for her own untimely end.

For an hour she lay, mourning and inconsolable. At last she raised herself to a sitting posture and glanced dully about her. Her tear-dimmed eyes rested on the face of her mother, looking down from her place on the wall opposite to the foot of Jane's bed. The pictured eyes seemed to shed infinite tenderness upon the lonely mourner. Her mother's portrait was Jane's shrine. It was the first object on which she looked when awakening in the morning. It was the last she saw ere her eyes closed in sleep.

As her troubled gaze sought the consolation of that earnest, sensitive face, with its tender, brooding smile, Jane was shaken by a sudden revulsion of feeling. What if those lips were to open in

gentle reproach at her defiance? It was a simple matter to defy her father and Aunt Mary, but to rebel against the edict of the dead, adored and unforgotten! Jane's sorrow burst forth anew.

"Forgive me, Dearest," she sobbed. "I was so angry I forgot you, but I'll try to do my best for your sake. I will try, Mother, I truly will."

For a little she sat brooding over what lay in store for her. Then, her tears dried, she dragged herself spiritlessly into her pretty white bathroom and bathed her face. As one in a dream she removed her riding habit and changed to a pretty white morning frock. "I'm a horrid, hateful girl to spoil Dad's and Aunt Mary's pleasure in my birthday," she reflected as she dusted her face with rice powder to remove all signs of her recent upheaval of composure. "I suppose breakfast is over long ago and Dad has gone. It serves me right."

"Here's my girl," called a cheery voice, as she soberly descended the stairs. Her father stood at the door of the living room, his eyes alight with affection.

Jane flung herself into his arms. "Forgive me, Dad! I was afraid you had gone. I'm too sorry for words, but I couldn't help—it." Her voice quavered.

"There, there! I know all about it. But you mustn't take it so hard. We hate to give up our little girl as much as she hates to give us up. Cheer up. The days will pass sooner than you think. You can come home at Christmas and Easter, too, if your vacations are long enough. I guess we can manage somehow to stretch them, if they aren't. I'll see to that. And when next June comes round you'll be back for all summer. You've got to live and learn, girl of mine, and you can't learn unless you go to school."

"I know it, Dad," answered Jane contritely. "I've fought it out and now I'm ready for whatever has to be. I'll try to be brave and a credit to you—and—Mother. She looked down on me to-day just as though she knew."

Her father's arms closed more tightly about her. There was a long, sweet moment in which the dead communed with the living.

Miss Allen had kept discreetly to the living room during the little scene between father and daughter. Now she appeared with a brisk, "Jane, if you don't come and see your presents your father and I will be so angry we'll go straight upstairs and lock ourselves in our rooms for the rest of the day."

Jane's sad face broke into a smile at this pointed

assertion. "I beg your pardon, too, Auntie, for being so ungrateful. But I'm not really so ungrateful as I may seem. I'm dying to see my presents. Allow me to escort you to the dining room while I gloat over them and count them and thank you both."

With a return of the playful sauciness that usually brought her exactly what she desired, Jane offered both arms to her dear ones and they paraded into the dining room three abreast. A joyous session ensued as Jane unwrapped and exclaimed over her gifts, while the two who loved her best looked on happily. There was a bracelet watch from her aunt, an emerald ring from her father and a number of other gifts best likely to please a girl.

"My special present to you is up in my room, Janie," said Mr. Allen when the last package had been brought to light and duly admired.

"Take me there this minute," commanded Jane. "Come on, I'll take you instead." She had seized her father's hand and pulled him to the dining room door almost before she had finished speaking.

"Oh, Dad, you old treasure!" burst from her lips three minutes later. "A real Mexican saddle and silver-mounted!" Then her pretty face fell.

In the midst of her joy she had suddenly remembered that she could not use it. She was going away from her beloved Western trails to a place where girls were eminently proper and knew nothing of the joy of racing over hill and dale on the back of a horse like Firefly. Yet she had promised to be brave. She would not spoil her father's pleasure in his gift to her by ungrateful repining.

"It's wonderful, Dad," she said brightly. "I'm going to take it down and show it to Firefly this instant. I'll tell him he must be good until Christmas; then this beautiful saddle will be for him and me when I come home."

"I'm afraid Firefly won't be here then," returned her father, looking solemn, but a twinkle in his eyes belied his gravity.

"Not be here! What do you mean?" The light died out of Jane's eyes. "Dad, you don't mean—you can't mean——"

"Firefly is as sadly in need of an education as some others I know," interrupted her father, "so I have decided to send him to a place called Wellington College."

Jane gave a little scream of rapture. "Firefly is to go with me! Oh, Daddy, dearest! I might have known you would plan something splendid.

I'm too happy for words! Firefly, my own beautiful pet! I've simply got to hurry and tell him the news. But first I'm going to hug you and Aunt Mary for all I'm worth and promise you that I'll succeed at college for your sakes, or my name isn't Jane Allen!"

CHAPTER III

THE TOKEN

ONCE Jane had become resigned to the inevitable she allowed herself no moments of repining. Despite Miss Mary Allen's assertion that she had been thoroughly spoiled, the girl possessed a firmness of purpose and a desire to reach up for all that was highest in life which was to carry her far in later years. To be sure, occasional moments of sadness were hers as she rode her favorite trails and lived those last precious days at El Capitan. She was a true child of Nature with aspirations and ideals as lofty as the mountains under whose shadow she had passed from infancy to childhood and from childhood to young womanhood, and, although in her heart she believed that nothing which the East might hold could compare with the wonder of the great Western outdoors, she

was slowly but earnestly forcing herself to look forward almost cheerfully to her new life.

Miss Mary Allen, however, was quite in her element in preparing for her pretty niece's flight eastward. She was a gentle little soul to whom the sturdy life of the West appealed but little. Now she spent her days in poring over the catalogues of the great New York stores and ordering the thousand and one articles she deemed necessary to complete Jane's wardrobe. In this fascinating occupation she was ably seconded by Miss Evans, who had elected to remain to see Jane off on her journey before going on to fulfill her destiny as governess to a little girl in Helena. Two dressmakers had also been added to the Allen mènage and the four women worked nobly in the cause of the girl who was soon to depart for pastures new.

Jane resigned herself to long, tedious fittings and the trying-on of countless garments with a patience remarkable in one possessing so restless a spirit as was hers. With the exception of riding clothes, she had little love for feminine "fripperies," as she was wont to term them. Her offhand acceptance of the dainty frocks which would have kept the average girl awake at night thinking of them was a matter to be deplored by her

aunt. "Wait until you are among other girls, and you will appreciate your pretty things," was Miss Mary's frequent cry when Jane exhibited less concern than usual over her wardrobe.

But at last the final trying-on was over. Two huge trunks held the fruit of the combined labor of the quartette of women. There remained little to be done and less to be desired, so far as Jane's needs were concerned. The dressmakers departed with much talk and good feeling. Miss Mary and Jane saw Miss Evans off to her new field of work, remaining on the station platform to catch the last flutter of the tear-stained handkerchief she waved from the car window.

It was then that the weight of parting settled down upon Jane like a pall. One more day and she, too, would be compelled to say farewell to all she cherished. Firefly had already started East, surrounded by every comfort possible to a horse. Pedro went with him to establish him in his new surroundings and look after his general welfare. Jane had insisted on this, and expense being of little object when compared with his daughter's wishes, Mr. Allen had consented to the arrangement.

Aunt Mary had loyally announced her intention of accompanying Jane to Wellington Col-

lege, regardless of the horrors of car-sickness which railway travel inevitably brought her. Jane, however, would not hear of it. "You sha'n't make a martyr of yourself for me, Auntie," she declared. "I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself. You know how sick riding on the cars always makes you. Dad thinks I need a guardian. He'd go in a minute if he weren't so busy here. Well, I'll excuse both of you. Sickness and business are good excuses. Don't worry over me. Nothing short of a railway accident could happen to me, and neither of you could prevent one if you went along." In the end Jane came out a winner, and after much earnest consultation it was decided that she should make the trip East alone.

The last day on the ranch was a memorable one to the young girl so soon to try her wings in what would be to her an unexplored land. She was up at dawn, determined to make every second of that precious day count. After a hasty breakfast she hurried to the stable and, mounted on Donabar, her father's great bay horse, rode slowly down the drive, her eyes drinking in every familiar stick and stone of El Capitan as though to impress its changeless beauty upon her mind in view of the coming separation. She wondered

sadly what this strange, self-contained East, of which she had read with contemptuous disfavor, could possibly offer her in lieu of the grandeur she was about to give up. What were Eastern girls like? She had met a few of them, tourists for the most part, with whom she had come in contact at the mountain resorts and in Helena. She had not been favorably impressed with them and they had not liked her. At home, the incarnation of joy and light-hearted youth, she had always retreated into her shell when approached by these ultra-modern girl-women whose lives had been spent in Eastern cities.

There was one thing for which to be thankful: she was to room alone. Already arrangements had been made for her at Madison Hall. There she was to make her home, provided she could pass her entrance examinations to Wellington. Perhaps she would not pass them, then—Jane straightened herself in the saddle with a resolute shake of her head. She would permit herself no such doubt. She had sworn to her father that she would do her best and she intended to keep her word.

The morning winged by all too soon. Noon found her miles from El Capitan. Jane took her luncheon from a leather knapsack which hung

from her shoulder and ate her last meal in the wild, her gray eyes fixed on the far horizon line, where her world seemed to end. Long she lingered in that sequestered spot, trying vainly to imagine what her new life would be like. Her ideas on this subject were decidedly vague and she could not see herself in the uncompromisingly dull picture her imagination drew. Aunt Mary had said that Wellington had long since ceased to be a seminary. It was now a college of the most modern order. That, at least, was a saving grace.

Jane spent the rest of the afternoon in visiting her favorite haunts. What a flood of memories they recalled! Away over yonder in the foothills she had been lost for a whole day. It was when she had first owned Benny, her gray pony, long passed away with the things of her childhood. She stopped for a little at Sentinel Canyon, where she and her father had so often gone picknicking. Then she rode on to where Silver Tongue Brook babbled noisily down its mountain course. To the left of where she reined in, where the water was deep, she had once fallen in and been fished out by Pedro in a half-drowned condition.

As she rode thoughtfully toward home, she

wished that out of the vast silence there might come some significant token of her long comradeship with Nature which she might treasure and dream of until she returned once more to her own.

The sudden shying of Donabar brought her out of her day-dream in a hurry. A sinister whirring sound filled the air. It meant but one thing. Directly in the path of horse and rider lay a huge, unsightly coil. Rising from its midst was poised a wicked, triangular head, ready to strike.

"Be quiet, Donny!" Jane leaped from her horse and looked about her for a stout stick. Two or three minutes elapsed before she found one. Then, with the fearlessness of those accustomed to the wild, she advanced upon the intruder of her dream and attacked it.

The battle was short. This was not the first rattlesnake which Jane had encountered and finished. Rattlers were common occurrences on El Capitan. Despite the wicked threshing of its tail, she stretched his snakeship to his full length. "It must be five feet, at least. Ugh!" She gave an involuntary shudder of disgust. "So this is my token. This is the sign," she murmured. "Snakes mean enemies. To kill one is to conquer

the enemy, so the saying goes. I hope this is not a prophesy of *my* future. I hoped I had deserved something better than this. But I killed it, at any rate, and if the new life brings me snakes in the shape of enemies—well—I'll conquer them, too."

CHAPTER IV

GOING EAST TO CAPTIVITY

"THERE'S your train, Janie! I hear it whistling."

Three faces were turned simultaneously toward the distant bend in the railroad track which as yet hid from their sight the train that was to bear Jane Allen eastward on the longest journey she had ever taken. It still lacked several minutes to eight o'clock on this hazy September morning and the platform of the little station was practically deserted, save for the three who awaited the oncoming train with the dread of farewell in their hearts. Mr. Allen's sudden exclamation had broken a heavy silence which had fallen upon them after they had left the automobile which had brought them to the station. Of the three, Jane was bearing up best under the strain of the inevitable good-bye so

soon to be said. Mr. Allen looked unusually solemn, his stern, clean-cut features set in somber lines. Every now and then Miss Mary Allen wiped a furtive tear from her soft brown eyes and inwardly berated herself for thus giving way to her emotion. Jane, however, was keeping a tight rein on her felings. She had vowed within herself to shed no tears on this, her going-away morning, and she intended to keep her vow.

"Don't cry, Aunt Mary," she comforted, as the train hove in sight and thundered down the shining rails toward them. "It is only until Christmas, you know. I'll remember every word you've said about taking good care of myself. I won't hang over the observation platform until I fall off the train, or speak to strangers, or do anything else that is likely to bring disaster upon my devoted head. I'll ask oodles of questions so as to be sure to get on the right train when I have to make changes, and conduct myself in a highly commendable manner. There! Doesn't that make you feel better? Smile your very nicest smile and say, 'Jane, I am positive that you could travel to Asia Minor and back without even losing your timetable.' "

Miss Allen managed to smile faintly at her niece's heroic effort to cheer her up. "Of course,

I believe you are to be trusted, my dear," she quavered, "but—but——"

"No 'buts' about it," retorted Jane sturdily. "I've taken lots of far more dangerous and exciting rides on Firefly. This going-East pilgrimage is easy. All I have to do is to mind the rules of the railroad, provided I know them, sit in a Pullman car, sleep in a Pullman berth, not the upper one, if you please, and all will be lovely."

"I'm sure I hope it will," began Miss Mary, but the clanging of bells and the grinding of ponderous iron wheels checked further remark on her part.

Mr. Allen gathered up Jane's luggage, which consisted of a small leather bag and a suitcase, and with, "Come on, girls," led the way up the car steps and into the train.

"I wish your father had reserved a stateroom for you at Helena," deplored Aunt Mary as she followed at her niece's heels.

"Nonsense, Auntie dear. I don't want one," retorted Jane over her shoulder. "Half the pleasure of traveling into strange lands would be spoiled. "I must be where I can see a lot of other people, or I'll be so homesick I'll get off at the first station and come trotting back to you and dear old Capitan."

"Remember," cautioned her aunt, "you've promised not to speak to strangers."

They were now inside the car and Mr. Allen was arranging Jane's effects.

"Hang on to your checks and your ticket, girl of mine," he reminded. "Now give us a last kiss, for the train is going to start in a minute and we can't linger."

Jane threw her arms about her aunt and kissed her twice. Her last caress was reserved for her father. For an instant she clung to him. "For your sake and Mother's, Dad," she whispered. "Good-bye, God bless and keep you until I see you again." A mist of tears blurred her vision, obscuring the retreating forms of those she loved. Dashing her hand across her eyes, she turned her face to the open window. A brief instant later Mr. Allen and Aunt Mary stood on the platform, directly under it. There was a warning jar of the train. Then it began to move. "Good-bye!" Jane called, striving to make her voice steady. "Good-bye until Christmas!" She strained her eyes as the train gathered momentum to catch the last glimpse of the two she was leaving. Her handkerchief fluttered a white signal of farewell, then unmindful of possible curious eyes that might be turned upon her, she allowed the grief

she had so bravely suppressed to shake her.

It was a brief storm of silent weeping that ended almost as soon as it began. Jane wiped her eyes, with a smothered exclamation of impatience for her moment of weakness, and sat up very straight in her seat. She was somewhat relieved to note that her fellow travelers had apparently paid no attention to her tears. There were not more than a dozen persons in her car and they seemed fully occupied with their own affairs.

Reaching for her bag, Jane opened it and took out the first book of a series of stories which she had been saving for the occasion. The series pertained to Eastern college life and she opened the initial volume and absently studied the title page. But she had not yet reached the point of settling herself to read. Her thoughts were centered on all she had left behind. She could see the spacious veranda of El Capitan and her own favorite chair, where she loved to idle an hour away, watching the changeful skies as the morning sun climbed upward and touched with warm fingers the home she had lost. She could see her father riding Donabar down the drive and almost hear her aunt calling, "Come to breakfast, Jane."

"Oh, what's the use in thinking," she muttered,

as her eyes threatened again to overflow. She fixed a resolute gaze on the fleeing landscape, but that was also conducive of retrospection. She had made the journey to Helena so many times she knew by heart the country through which she was passing.

With a forlorn sigh she sought once more to interest herself in her book. "Beatrice Horton's First Year at Exley," she read, then she turned to the first page of the narrative and began to read. It was not long before her recent gloom was swallowed up in the interest of the story. It was a captivating tale, cleverly told and warranted to hold the attention of one about to enter a similar field. Unlike herself, Beatrice, the heroine, was a poor girl who by reason of her poverty was made to endure many slights and insults at the hands of her fellow students who came from more fortunate walks in life. Jane found herself thrilling with anger at the unfair treatment of the much-abused Beatrice. Then and there she made a resolve that if she chanced to find a girl at Wellington in the position of the unfortunate freshman she would at once constitute herself champion to the ill-treated one.

She wondered if such snobbery as was displayed by Katherine Stanton, a particularly dis-

agreeable character in the story, really existed among college girls. Long afterward, when she had come to know the truth of many things which were as yet veiled, she remembered that morning on the train spent with the story girl, Beatrice Horton.

It was almost dark when the train pulled into Helena. Jane had eaten a lonely luncheon and hurried from the dining car to continue the reading of the adventures of Beatrice. Her train east was due within a few moments after her arrival at Helena, and she had no difficulty in changing.

Nine o'clock that evening found her in the berth which had been reserved for her by telegraph, but sleep refused to visit her and she spent the greater part of the night staring out of the window at the strange shapes and apparitions into which darkness changes the most commonplace landscape.

Jane's ride to St. Louis was one of unrelieved monotony. True to her promise to her aunt, she eyed askance the companions of her journey, exhibiting the reserve of a seasoned traveler. This had been no hardship. She had seen not a single face that interested her. There were fussy old men whom it bored her to look at. There were

still fussier women, young and old, who established themselves in the dressing room and chattered common-places until she hated the very sight of them.

It was with distinct relief that she at last boarded the train at St. Louis which was to leave her at her final destination. It had been a tiresome journey and she was glad that so much of it had been accomplished. She had long since finished "Beatrice Horton's Fourth Year at Exley," and had experienced the satisfaction of leaving Beatrice a popular and triumphant graduate. Now, as smoke-blackened St. Louis faded from view and gradually gave place to the more open country, she found herself wishing that there was someone besides the obsequious porter to whom she might speak. For the first time she began to take a speculative interest in those about her. Her attention finally became fixed upon a girl of about her own age who was traveling with her mother. Jane guessed that the stout blonde woman, whose red face expressed a marked dissatisfaction with the world in general, was the mother of the young woman she had noticed. There was a decided resemblance between them, although the younger of the two was tall and not so distinctly blonde in type. Both faces wore

the same supercilious look, and Jane discovered that she disliked the girl even more than she disliked her mother.

At dinner that night she saw them at uncomfortably close range, for they were seated at the next table to hers, and as both spoke rather loudly she could hear much of their conversation. From it she gathered, as she had surmised, that they were mother and daughter and that the latter was, like herself, going East to college. Marian, she heard the elder woman so address the younger, was a self-opinionated young person who continually contradicted her mother, a lapse of breeding which the latter bore with a meekness that belied her arrogant look. "What a disagreeable girl," thought Jane. "I'm glad I don't know her."

Jane had leisurely begun her dessert when the two women swept from the dining car with the air of having conquered the universe. As the girl, Marian, passed her, something white fluttered to the floor directly at Jane's feet. She stooped mechanically and picked up the object. It was a hand-embroidered handkerchief of very fine linen. "I'll give it to the porter and tell him to hand it to her," she decided, but when she returned to her seat in the Pullman the porter

was nowhere to be seen. For a little time she held it in her hand, then with her natural impatience of delay she walked boldly down the aisle and tendered it to its owner with a curt, "I believe this belongs to you. You dropped it in the dining car."

A battery of four critical eyes was leveled at Jane. With the unerring faculty which the eternal feminine possesses for appraising the members of her own sex, Jane's expensive traveling suit of brown chiffon broadcloth, her smart brown hat and faultlessly matched shoes and gloves were noted and approved. Then the older woman beamed blandly. The younger took the handkerchief from Jane's outstretched hand, bowed graciously and said: "Oh, thank you so much. Yes, it is my handkerchief. I did not know that I had dropped it. Awfully kind in you, I'm sure. It is so hard to keep track of one's belongings when traveling."

Jane acknowledged the other's thanks with a courteous bow and turned away. She had no desire for further conversation with the young woman. The deceitfully sweet recognition of the service made no impression on her. If the recipient had snatched the handkerchief from her hand it would have been quite in keeping with

the rudeness to her mother which Jane had seen her exhibit in the dining car.

She was, therefore, not particularly pleased when the following morning she encountered the object of her dislike in the dressing room and the latter greeted her effusively. She returned the salutation with polite indifference, but did not encourage further conversation. Later in the day she was distinctly annoyed when someone dropped into the chair beside her and she found herself staring into the cold blue eyes of the girl she had privately decided she detested.

"I hope you won't think I'm intruding," apologized the girl sweetly, "but I'm awfully tired of no one but Mamma for company. We never talk five minutes together without contradicting each other, and you looked so interesting yesterday when you spoke to us that I made up my mind, then and there, that I'd like to know you better. One can always pick out really nice persons by their clothes and manners. Don't you think so?"

Jane smiled faintly. The innate snobbery of the stranger's last speech was plainly apparent.

"I really couldn't say," she returned evenly. Then she added, a trifle wickedly, "I suppose one is frequently estimated by them, however."

"Of course one is," agreed the girl, taking Jane's remark with evident seriousness. "I can't endure shabby, frumpy people. All my friends at home belong to the best families in the city. My name is Marian Seaton and I live in St. Louis. I am going East to Wellington, a very fine college, to continue my education. I attended Carlton Hall, a select prep. school, last year, so I don't have to try any entrance examinations to Wellington. I'm going to live at the most exclusive house on the campus. The name of it is Madison Hall."

CHAPTER V

AT THE JOURNEY'S END

JANE listened to this astonishing revelation in dismayed silence. Of all curious coincidences this was surely the strangest. It was on her tongue to exclaim, "Why, I am going there, too!" but she held her peace. With sudden perversity she resolved to divulge nothing pertaining to herself or her plans. She merely inquired politely: "Have you friends at Wellington?"

"Oh, yes. I know several girls there. Most of them are upper class students. I have a chum, too, from Buffalo, who is to be my roommate. Her father is a millionaire and she owns a limousine and a riding horse. We expect to have glorious times. I can have a horse if I want one, but I hate horseback riding. Do you ride?"

Jane nodded absently. At the words "riding

horse" her mind reverted to Firefly. She wondered if he had made the long journey safely.

"Have you a horse?" came the eager question.

"Yes." Jane's straight brows drew together in a frown at having admitted even that much.

"And have you a car?"

"No, I hate automobiles. I only use them for convenience."

"How funny!" The girl eyed Jane speculatively. She was not progressing so fast in acquaintance as she had expected. Her revelations as to her social standing and destination had evoked neither surprise nor approval. This taciturn stranger who owned her own riding horse seemed worth cultivating, however.

"Have you ever been to college?" she persisted.

"No."

"Nor to a prep. school?"

"No."

"I suppose you are going to visit friends in the East?"

"No; I know no one there."

"Where is your home?"

Jane's frown deepened as she briefly named the town nearest to El Capitan.

"Oh-h! Why, you live in the country, don't

you? It must be awfully wild and uncivilized away up there."

"It is the most beautiful place in the world." Jane forgot her late resolution, irritated into sudden defense of her home, by the patronizing comment.

There came a moment of silence in which the questioner endeavored to reconcile her smartly clad companion to her grudging admissions.

"Do you imagine you will like the East?" The curious one rallied to her task.

"No, I shall hate it," declared Jane with a ferocious energy that caused the girl to stare, then say hastily:

"I think I had better go back to Mamma."

Jane sighed grim relief at the retreating form. "She didn't find out much," was her inward comment. "I hope she stays away from me in future."

In the meantime the other girl was relating to her languidly interested parent the result of her gleaning, and remarking that she was sure Jane must be "awfully exclusive." She also added that she intended to find out more about her before the end of the journey.

But in this laudable effort she found herself balked at every turn. Jane was uniformly cour-

teous, but most uncommunicative. She experienced considerable satisfaction in foiling these persistent attempts to learn her business and destination. She had no inclination to cultivate Marian Seaton, her chum from Buffalo, or her upper class friends. Her abhorrence of a snob was ingrained. Over and over again her father had said: "It's not fine clothes or riches that count, Janie. It's the heart. The poorest person may be the richest, after all." Marian Seaton's views of life spelled snobbery with a capital S, and Jane determined to steer clear of her.

The long journey drew toward its end. Jane awoke at dawn on the last morning of her travel, and sitting up in her berth eagerly scanned her timetable. She would have time for breakfast before reaching her destination. She hurried into her lounging robe and bedroom slippers and made an early dash for the dressing room. She was glad to find it deserted. Early rising was evidently not in order with her fellow travelers. It was luxury indeed to have an opportunity to make her toilet alone and undisturbed. She answered the first call to breakfast, had finished eating and was in her chair before Marian Seaton and her mother had reached the stage of breakfast.

Jane had planned to leave the train first at Chesterford, the little city near where Wellington was situated. She had faithfully perused her college bulletin and knew that Wellington College was situated three miles from the city. She would hail the nearest taxicab, she hated busses, and be driven at once to Madison Hall. Then she need not encounter Marian Seaton's astonished gaze until she was established in her new surroundings. She had no doubt the latter would be surprised. Jane smiled grimly at the thought. The snobbish freshman would have ample time to recover from her amazement.

"Chesterford! Chesterford!" came at last the stentorian call of the brakeman.

Jane Allen gathered up her luggage and made a hurried exit from the car. A fleeting backward glance revealed the Seatons deep in the act of collecting their effects. Disdaining the arm of the porter, she swung down the steps. Then she paused in sheer astonishment. The station platform was peopled with girls. They stood in eager, chatting groups or walked up and down in twos and threes. Still more astounding were the numbers of young women that were detraining from the day coaches far up the platform. She had no idea that so many students of Wellington

had come to college on her train. There were tall girls and short girls, pretty girls and plain. The majority of those who had awaited the arrival of the train were dressed in white. Several young women glanced at her curiously as she hurried across the station platform. Just beyond it she had spied two or three busses and a solitary taxicab. Jane made directly for it. She was glad no one had addressed her. In the Beatrice Horton stories there had been committees of upper class girls who had purposely met the trains for the purpose of welcoming the newcomers. This evidently was not the case in real life. Jane smiled to herself a trifle satirically. She had not expected recognition, and yet deep in her heart she knew that she would have been glad if some friendly voice had said, "Welcome to Wellington."

With a contemptuous shrug for her own weakness she hailed the driver.

"Yes, miss. Wellington, did you say? I'll take you there directly."

Jane handed him her luggage and climbed into the taxicab. "I hope he'll start at once," she frowned.

But the man lingered. He did not propose to stop at a single fare.

There followed what appeared to her an eternity of waiting. Jane watched the busy scene on the platform with absent eyes. Why didn't that driver start?

"This way, ladies," she heard him bawl. Then she gave a subdued exclamation of consternation. A trio of girls, walking three abreast, were heading directly for her. One of them was stout and dark, with bold black eyes. One of them was small and slender, with thin, nervous hands which she kept in continual motion. The girl walking in the middle was tall and blonde, with cold blue eyes and a supercilious air. Just ahead of them stalked a stout and all-too familiar figure. Jane's carefully laid plans had come to naught. The Seatons had overtaken her and their moment of surprise was at hand.

CHAPTER VI

A SERIOUS MISTAKE

JANE'S first impulse was to step from the taxicab and scurry out of sight. The advancing quartette were too deeply absorbed in their own affairs to have yet noticed her. Then she remembered that the chauffeur was in possession of her luggage. She settled back in her seat with a feeling of despair. She was in no mood to explain to Marian Seaton and her mother her reason for having kept her destination to herself. It was no affair of theirs, and she did not propose to answer the avalanche of questions which Marian was likely to hurl at her.

"Step in, Mamma," commanded Marian's high-pitched voice. Suddenly her self-satisfied expression changed to one of undisguised amazement. "Why—— What—where are you going?"

"To Madison Hall," Jane replied calmly. There was now no further use in concealment. It was hardly worth while to evade answering Marian's question.

Jane's announcement served merely to increase Marian Seaton's bewilderment. "Madison Hall!" she gasped. "Then you are to be a student at Wellington College! Why didn't you tell me?" A note of resentment replaced the surprise in her voice.

"It was not a matter of very great interest," said Jane quietly, lifting her head a little under the concerted gaze of four pairs of eyes. Mrs. Seaton was glaring plain disapproval of Jane. Marian's companions looked as though they wondered what it was all about. A dull flush of anger had risen to Marian's cheeks.

"You might have told me," she returned with a touch of sullenness.

The chauffeur stood watching them with ill-concealed impatience. Time meant money to him. "Step in, ladies. Take you straight to Madison Hall," he broke in significantly, consulting his watch.

"We aren't going back yet, Marian," drawled the stout girl. "Alicia expects a freshman cousin on the next train from the east. It's due here

in a few minutes. Good-bye. We'll see you later. Five in one taxicab is rather too many."

"Wait a minute." Marian whirled about and began a low-toned conversation with her friends. Mrs. Seaton had already disposed herself in the wide seat beside Jane. She was regarding the latter with open displeasure. Ignoring the now frowning chauffeur, the trio continued their conversation.

"Don't keep this man waiting, Marian." Her mother's sharp reminder had its effect. With a last word to her friends, accompanied by a significant gesture which caused them to burst into laughter, Marian turned and entered the taxicab.

Jane's cheeks burned hotly. She did not doubt that she had been the subject of that conversation and that the remark which had provoked the laughter was at her expense. Still *she* had provoked the rudeness. She could scarcely blame Marian. Yet she found herself raging inwardly at the latter's prompt retaliation.

With a snort of relief the driver turned to his car.

"Wait a moment," called Jane. Stepping nimbly on the running board, she slipped into the seat beside the driver. He started his car with an energy that plainly betokened his state

of mind, and it glided out of the station yard, bearing a most antagonistic trio.

Jane felt rather than heard the remarks that were directed toward her offending back. In deliberately changing her seat she had thrown down the gauntlet with a vengeance. She was not particularly troubled, however, at the turn her affairs had taken. Tolerance was not one of her virtues. Nor was deceit one of her failings. She had never pretended what she did not feel, and from childhood she had refused to countenance those whom she did not like. Living near to Nature had given her an unusually keen insight into character for a girl of her years and she instantly detected and condemned insincerity and artificiality. She had mentally set down the Seatons as insincere and artificial and had quickly decided against them. Therefore it took little effort on her part to dismiss them from her mind and center her attention on the clean, wide streets of Chesterford, lined with charming residences of wood and stone, set in smooth, closely clipped stretches of living green, and shaded by fine old trees. She had yet to reach the stage when the longing for the companionship of girls of her own age would change the atmosphere of her whole life. She was still the free, untamed pro-

duct of the wild, and the prison bars of civilization had not yet closed about her.

The man at the wheel drove his car at as high a rate of speed as he dared. He was grimly endeavoring to make up for lost time. He covered the three miles between the station and Wellington College in short order.

Jane stared ahead with eager interest as a vast expanse of beautifully kept rolling green burst upon her view. They had reached the edge of the campus. On a gentle rise of ground, in a setting of magnificent trees, rose the gray spires of Wellington Hall. Here and there on the campus were ornamental gray stone buildings of lesser grandeur. Some of them she immediately concluded to be campus houses where the more fortunate students of Wellington College were domiciled. Others she took to be halls devoted to the various arts and sciences included in the curriculum of the institution.

The taxicab turned in through an open gateway of wrought iron upon a broad drive which wound in and out of the vast sheath of velvety green. Here and there it was dotted with the figures of white-clad girls, with an occasional dash of color to relieve the effect.

"Madison Hall," called the man, slowing down

to a stop before an imposing four-story structure. Three or four girls, seated upon the broad, vine-clad veranda, looked indolent interest as the newcomers alighted from the car.

Jane handed the chauffeur her fare with an additional generous gratuity that brought her a beaming smile from that disgruntled individual, and hopped to the ground. It was not she who had offended his commercial instincts, and heartlessly leaving the Seatons to await his pleasure, before collecting his just dues, he carried Jane's luggage to the veranda and deposited it on the floor. She followed him, and mounting the steps, cast an uncertain glance about her. A tall girl in white, with soft brown hair and large blue eyes, rose lazily from her wicker chair and said in a friendly voice: "How do you do? Can I be of service to you?"

"Will you kindly tell me where I can find Mrs. Weatherbee? She is the matron here, is she not?" Jane answered the tall girl's pleasant smile with one equally friendly. She was drawn toward this courteous stranger.

"Come into the living room. I'll find her and tell her of your arrival. My name is Judith Sterns."

Jane bowed. "I am Jane Allen," she replied.

"Are *you* Miss Allen? How funny! Pardon me, I don't mean that there is anything funny in the fact that you are you. I mean that my receiving you is quite a coincidence, isn't it?"

Jane regarded the speaker with puzzled eyes. What was she talking about?

The tall girl interpreted her mystified glance. "You don't understand me. Therefore I'll explain. You are to be my roommate."

"Your roommate!" Jane's straight brows drew together in a frown. Then recovering herself, she said: "Pardon my surprise. I applied for a single room. There must be some mistake."

"Perhaps it is I who am mistaken," returned the girl with signal good humor. "I can't help saying that I hope I'm right, though. I've been looking forward to knowing a real Western girl."

"Thank you." Jane could not bring herself to echo the sentiment. She was distinctly perturbed at the prospect of sharing her room with another. When she had bowed to her father's decree in the matter of going to college she had stipulated that she was to have her room to herself.

"Have a seat," invited Judith as they stepped

into the living room, a long, light apartment with creamy walls, bordered in brown, and furnished in golden oak. "I'll find Mrs. Weatherbee and bring her directly." Suiting the action to the word, she left Jane to her own disturbed reflections and set off on her errand.

The sound of an electric bell followed by the murmur of voices caused her to turn her attention to the door. Marian Seaton and her mother were being ushered into the room by a trim maid. They had tarried to haggle over the matter of fare with the long-suffering chauffeur. With the merest shade of a glance toward Jane, they seated themselves on a brown velvet davenport at the far end of the room. Jane turned an indifferent gaze to the open window near her. From her chair she could view the veranda and its occupants. The girl who had introduced herself as Judith Stearns was apparently the only idler. All the others were deep in books. She guessed that they were preparing to face their coming examinations and she afterward learned that she had surmised correctly.

The entrance of the maid with, "Come with me, please," addressed to the Selbys, who rose and followed her, recalled to Jane the fact that her messenger was slow in returning. Ten min-

utes went by. Still she did not appear. Two or three young women passed the wide, curtain-draped door of the living room, on their way up the open staircase in the hall. "Why doesn't she come back?" was Jane's impatient reflection. But twenty, then thirty minutes slipped by and still she sat waiting. Suddenly Marian Seaton's high-pitched tones assaulted her ears. A deep, pleasant voice was heard speaking. Through the doorway the Seatons stood revealed, in conversation with a tall, stately woman in white with a crowd of snow-white hair framing fine, sensitive features. The three leisurely mounted the staircase, while the watcher clenched her hands in sheer impatience, tinged with resentment. The woman with the white hair must be Mrs. Weatherbee. If this were so, she, Jane, had been deliberately ignored. It was humiliating, to say the least. Jane was obsessed with a wild desire to rush from the house and back to the station, there to catch the first train for the West. She had been right in her presentiment that nothing good could come to her out of this hateful East.

Suddenly a familiar figure appeared in the doorway. There was a horrified, "Oh!" then Judith Sterns hurried toward Jane, contrition written on every feature.

"You poor girl!" she exclaimed. "I hope you'll forgive me, but—well—I really forgot all about you. I'll tell you a sad but bitter truth, I'm dreadfully absent-minded. It's my besetting sin. I started out to find Mrs. Weatherbee for you, and a girl I met yesterday, who rooms on the second floor, called me into her room to see some Japanese prints she was unpacking. We were so busy looking at them I forgot all about what I started out to do. When I did finally remember, I hustled down here as fast as ever I could. It's a shame. I hope you'll forgive me." She fixed her big blue eyes on Jane so imploringly that the latter could not resist smiling a little.

"It doesn't matter. I believe Mrs. Weatherbee is busy at present."

'Oh, have you seen her?" asked Judith in patent relief.

"I saw a tall woman with white hair," replied Jane. "She went upstairs with a young woman and her mother."

"That's Mrs. Weatherbee!" cried Judith, brightening. "Well, whoever goes up must come down. I'll go out in the hall and camp on her trail. That sounds really Western, doesn't it? 'Camp on her trail,' I mean. Some ill-natured

persons might spitefully say it was slang, though."

Jane smiled again. The sudden change from gloom to laughter made her face beautiful.

"How delightful you look when you smile," commented Judith naïvely. "I can't help saying again that I'm really glad of that mistake about your room."

The sparkle died out of Jane's eyes. She was not glad. Judith Stearns might be a very charming acquaintance, but she did not propose to have her or any other girl at Madison Hall for a roommate. The mistake must be rectified. She would see to that.

CHAPTER VII.

THE END OF A TROUBLED DAY

"I AM very sorry, Miss Allen, but I am afraid nothing can be done for you in the way of a single room now. I acknowledge that it was an error on my part. I cannot understand how I came to overlook your request, but unless one of the young women now here were to fail in her examinations I could not put you by yourself."

"But my aunt stated distinctly in her letter to you that I wished to room alone, and you wrote that you would arrange it," reminded Jane sharply, her too-ready frown marring the beauty of her smooth forehead. She was not used to being crossed in her wishes and she did not intend to submit tamely.

"I repeat that it was an error on my part." Mrs. Weatherbee regarded Jane with dignified

displeasure. Once her ultimatum had been delivered, *she* did not intend it should be contested.

Judith Stearns had not failed in her errand the second time. True to her word, she had hung about the stairway until Mrs. Weatherbee had descended, then she had brought the matron to Jane and presented her to the latter. She had remained rooted to the spot, however, for hardly had the introduction been given when Jane inquired coldly regarding her room, adding that she wished the error rectified at once. In her exasperation over what she mentally set down as very stupid management on the part of the matron, Jane had quite forgotten the presence of her roommate elect and her cheerfully performed service, and delivered herself of a number of rather candid remarks on the subject. Hurt to the quick, Judith had quietly left the room with a most unflattering opinion of Westerners in general which it took many weeks of companionship with Jane to change. The tall, beautiful girl whom she had been prepared to hail as a comrade did not wish to room with her. Perhaps Mrs. Weatherbee might find a way after all to give this haughty stranger her desire. If not, then she made a solemn resolution that she would never force her friendship upon Jane. And thus

the spoiled darling of a too-adoring father and aunt closed a door against herself that had opened so hospitably, and which would only reopen after she had learned the divine principle of giving and taking.

"Perhaps you may be able to secure a single room in one of the other campus houses, Miss Allen." The quiet voice, freighted now with distant reserve, acted like a dash of cold water on Jane's anger. She realized that she had met with a force which no amount of battering could break down.

"I know nothing of Wellington College or its campus houses," she said sullenly. "My aunt wished me to live in Madison Hall. I shall, of course, abide by her wishes. It is unfortunate, however, that the error occurred. Will you kindly show me to the half of the room you have reserved for me?" Her inflection became slightly sarcastic.

Mrs. Weatherbee studied intently the pretty, belligerent face on a level with her own. Behind it she glimpsed something of the troubled soul within. "My dear," she said impulsively, "don't begin your college life like this. You are looking on the dark side of things. I know you must be disappointed, and I feel myself entirely respon-

sible for your disappointment. Cheer up and try to make the best of things. Do not allow it to cloud your freshman sky."

But Jane was in no mood for consolation, particularly when the consoler was at fault. "You are very kind," she returned ironically, "but I cannot help feeling that I have been rather unfairly treated. However, as you have advised, I shall try to make the best of things. Will you please show me to my room? I am anxious to begin reviewing for my examinations." She had intended to inquire the particulars concerning them, but disdained to do so.

"Come with me." Mrs. Weatherbee's kindly interest in the newcomer vanished. "What a thoroughly disagreeable young woman!" was her thought. In silence she led the way up two flights of stairs and opened a door at the end of the hall. "This will be your room," she announced briefly. With a courteously cold inclination of her head she walked away, leaving Jane in possession of the room in which she was to fight so many silent battles with her proud self.

Jane set down her luggage and viewed her surroundings with contempt. This bare, gray-walled room, relieved only by narrow leaf borders in a darker shade, suggested little of the

luxury of her own chamber at El Capitan. There were two couch beds, at opposite sides of the apartment, draped with tastefully-colored covers. There were two chiffonieres, a dressing table, a wardrobe, two washstands, and a good-sized center table. There were absolutely no pictures. Jane learned in time that the college girl prefers her own scheme of decoration to any that may be devised for her on the part of the management. The despised room had two good points, however. It was both large and light, with a double window that looked directly out on stately Wellington Hall.

Prowling about it with the uneasy glide of a trapped animal, Jane explored the closets, of which there were two, peered into the wardrobe and tried the drawers of the chiffonieres. The first one stuck. Under the force of her sturdy arms it opened with a jerk. A quantity of handkerchiefs and collars tumbled out. With an exclamation of disgust she hastily replaced them and continued her explorations. Then, without removing her hat and coat, she threw herself disconsolately into a Morris chair, the only comfortable one in the room, and gave herself up to resentful thought. How she hated it all!

For a long time she sat, staring gloomily out

at the green campus. It at least was worthy of notice. She longed to rush out of the house, throw herself upon its emerald bosom and cry her heart out. A mission clock on the wall, ticking its imperturbable way toward noon, finally reminded her that she must visit the registrar's office and learn what lay in store for her. She hoped that she would fail in her examinations, then a vision of her mother's face rose before her and she rebuked herself for her unworthy thought.

It was almost noon when she descended the stairs and passed out of the house to the veranda. It was deserted save for a solitary student, too deeply engaged in a book to raise her eyes as Jane wended her lonely way down the steps and across the campus toward Wellington Hall. She encountered numbers of girls walking singly or in twos and threes, but she was far too engrossed in her own dreary thoughts to pay any attention to them. She did not even note that a certain tall, blue-eyed girl had bowed rather timidly to her, then looked unutterably hurt upon receiving no answering sign of recognition. Unwittingly Jane had cut Judith Stearns.

Once inside Wellington Hall she had no special difficulty in finding the registrar's office.

That efficient person was already deep in the business of interviewing prospective students who were soon to face the ordeal of entrance examinations, and attending to the wants of all comers. Finding she would have to wait her turn, Jane seated herself on a high-backed oak bench and began a minute study of the woman who was so important a factor of the college. She watched the plain, kind features which every now and then broke into a sunny smile at one or another of the stream of girls who besieged her desk, and decided that although she might be worth knowing, there was every possibility that she would prove as disappointing on acquaintance as Mrs. Weatherbee. Jane had yet to discover that it was she, rather than those with whom she had thus far come in contact, who was at fault. But the moment of soul illumination was still far off.

When at last she stood before Miss Howard, the registrar, and made her inquiries, she was received in such pleasant fashion that she actually forgot, for the moment, her hatred of all things collegiate and met Miss Howard halfway, thereby registering on that business-like individual's mind a favorable impression which she never had reason to change. In the dark days

that were to follow, Jane found in her, once she had learned to know her, a refuge in time of storm.

After a friendly consultation with her over the printed examination program, Jane said good-bye and turned reluctantly away. She would have liked to talk to Miss Howard for hours, but she realized that even minutes were golden to the busy, efficient woman at the desk. Consulting her new bracelet watch, which she had set by the mission clock in her room, she found that it was nearly two o'clock. Luncheon must be over at Madison House. That was of no consequence. She had plenty of money. She would walk into Chesterford and lunch at a hotel or restaurant. She swung down the stone walk with a sudden rush of exhilaration. She was free again, at least for an hour or two.

She had not left the campus far behind her, however, when she came to a charming little house. Over the open doorway was cut in letters of stone "Rutherford Inn." This was the very place she had been seeking, but had not expected to find so near the college. She did not then know that it held a place in the affections of the Wellington girls second only to the traditions of the college itself. She now remembered passing it

during her ride of that morning, but had given it a mere cursory glance. Now she went boldly up the flagstone walk and entered its shady, inviting porch. Then she paused for a moment in dismay. It was fairly well-filled with laughing, chatting girls. Her first impulse was to turn away, then the quaint, massive tables of black walnut, decked with spotless linen and heavy silver, proved an irresistible temptation. She made her way down a broad center aisle toward a smaller table at the far end that was empty. Suddenly her face brightened. At the next table to the one for which she was aiming sat Judith Stearns, in company with two other girls. Jane's talk with Miss Howard had left her in a softened frame of mind. Then, too, she had begun to feel a trifle lonely. Seeing Judith's eyes fixed upon her, she smiled and bowed. But Judith deliberately averted her face and began a rapid conversation with the girl seated beside her. She had been once rebuffed, now she would show this haughty stranger that it was her turn to do the rebuffing.

The red tide of mortification stung Jane's cheeks. Her desire to be amiable vanished. She hurried to her table and sank into a high-backed chair, inwardly raging. So, this was the way Eastern girls behaved toward a stranger! It was

bad enough to be deliberately neglected as Judith had neglected her that morning, but it was worse to receive the cut direct. If she roomed with this rude freshman for a thousand years she would never, never forgive her!

She picked up the menu and strove to hide her mortification in a distracted consultation of its pages. When the waitress came to take her order, she had settled upon nothing, but desperately ordered creamed chicken and tea and afterward remembered that she did not like either of them.

Luncheon was a dismal failure. Jane managed to eat a roll and a few mouthfuls of the despised chicken, drank half a cup of tea, and left Rutherford Inn divided between anger and despair. She did not cast so much as the flicker of an eyelash toward her ill-mannered roommate. There was but one thing to be done. She would return to her room and begin her review. She would not eat dinner that night. She would remain upstairs and study.

On the walk in front of Madison Hall she encountered Marian Seaton. Neither girl made sign of recognition, beyond a haughty toss of Marian's blonde head. Jane smiled cynically. She did not object to being cut by Marian. She

rather enjoyed it. But Judith was a different matter. Jane could not forget her good-natured, friendly advances. Why had Judith seemed so nice at first and then behaved so rudely?

After a somewhat lengthy toilet, during which Jane changed her traveling gown for a one-piece frock of soft white China silk, the only gown she had carried in her suit-case, her anger subsided and she settled herself to study. At five o'clock Judith Stearns entered the room. She glanced toward the silent figure at the window, apparently lost in study, then compressing her lips went quietly about her preparations for dinner. She bathed her face and hands, re-coiled her long brown hair, and departed as mutely as she had come.

Determined to make a martyr of herself, Jane ignored the pangs of healthy hunger and stolidly kept to her room. She heard the merry ring of voices and the patter of light feet in the corridor, as the hungry girls of Madison Hall answered the clang of the dinner bell. Hunger at length compelled her to open her traveling bag and take from it a box of wafers and a cake of sweet chocolate. She dined in solitary state on these light comestibles, drank a glassful of water and returned doggedly to her text books.

Gloaming fell, a soft, misty twilight with a thousand purple shadows. A crescent moon appeared and hung above the distant hills with tender grace. Jane strained her eyes to her task until darkness blotted out the printed letters, over which she bent in an agony of loneliness. Then her listening ears caught the soft tinkle of a mandolin, mingled with the deeper notes of a guitar. A song rose on the still air. It was followed by a ripple of girlish laughter. Another song followed. Jane left her chair, and kneeling at the open window, peered out. She could just see the end of the veranda where the singers were evidently seated.

For an hour the concert continued. Still she crouched at the window, listening. There came a brief lull in the singing. She heard a clear voice call, "Give us 'Wellington, Our Alma Mater,' Dorothy." Several voices joined in the request. There came a particularly beautiful prelude, then the song rang out that had thrilled the heart of every student of Wellington for a generation.

"Wellington, our Alma Mater,
Hark, our voices rise to thee!
Heart and hand each ardent daughter
Pledges truth and loyalty.

Guard and keep us, noble Mother,
Turn our thoughts to deeds of love,
Kindliness to one another,
May we ever faithful prove—
To be ranked as thy dear children,
In thy halls of deathless fame,
Guide us, teach us, blessed Mother,
To be worthy of thy name!"

Jane laid her head on the window sill, swept by a storm of tearless emotion. This was what college might mean to her if she could truly live up to its traditions. "Guide me, teach me, blessed Mother," she whispered. "Dear Mother in Heaven, and dear Alma Mater, for the sake of one who loved me and the other Mother whose child I hope to be, I'll begin all over again and try to do my best!"

CHAPTER VIII

BEATRICE HORTON THE SECOND

LONG after the song of Wellington had ended and the singers on the veranda had gone on to others, Jane lingered at the window. Her mind occupied with her desire to do well, the music did not continue to thrill her so profoundly. Lost in her own meditations, it fell upon dimly listening ears. If she were to begin afresh, first of all, she must have an understanding with Judith Sterns. Ashamed of her rudeness of the morning, she did not wonder that Judith had appeared not to see her while at Rutherford Inn. Jane decided that she would apologize to her roommate as soon as she appeared. For an hour she waited patiently for the pleasant-faced girl against whose companionship she had openly rebelled. But Judith did not appear.

When ten o'clock came, Jane's natural impatience of delay overcame her good resolutions. She decided, somewhat resentfully, that Judith was purposely absenting herself from the room. As she had exchanged no words with her beyond those of the morning, she could not know that Judith was not with the singers on the veranda. Being among those who had entrance examinations to take, she was industriously carrying on a review in the room of Ethel Lacey, the girl on the second floor, whose fascinating Japanese print had been responsible for her defect as a messenger.

When at half-past ten Judith gathered up her books, said good night to Ethel and sought her room, Jane was fast asleep. Bodily tired by the long journey and mentally worn out by her troubled thoughts, she had succumbed to slumber almost as soon as her head touched the pillow. Judith made her preparations for sleep with the least possible noise. But before she switched off the light, she stole across the room to Jane's couch and stood for an instant regarding her almost sorrowfully. If only this beautiful, proud-faced girl had lived up to the reputed whole-heartedness of the West. Judith felt that she had been cheated of that which she had had

reason to expect. She wished that she might have Ethel for a roommate. The girl who was to room with Ethel would not arrive until the following week. She wondered if she, too, would prove a disagreeable surprise. Ethel had said that her name was Adrienne Dupree and she lived in New York City. Judith gave a faint sigh of regret as she slipped into her bed. She hoped Ethel, at least, would not be disappointed.

Though Jane's first day at Wellington College had been one of unrest, her sleep was deep and untroubled. Her dreams were of El Capitan and the dear ones she had left behind. When her drowsy eyelids lifted, it was to find the sunlight of a perfect autumn day streaming in upon her. She gazed about her in sleepy bewilderment. This was not her room. Then recollection rushed over her in a dismaying flood. She knew only too well where she was. Her eyes traveled to the couch at the opposite side of the room. It was without an occupant. In sudden alarm she glanced at the clock. It pointed to ten minutes of eight.

"Oh!" she gasped. The remembrance that her first examination began at half-past nine served to stir her to action. In spite of the fact that Judith had evidently kept away from her the

previous night, Jane still intended offering an apology. It now looked as though it would have to be postponed indefinitely. She smiled bitterly. Judith was showing unmistakable signs of hostility. She had not even troubled herself to awaken her sleeping roommate.

Jane performed hasty ablutions and proceeded to dress with commendable speed. Fifteen minutes later she was on her way downstairs to breakfast. As this was to be her first meal at Madison Hall she was assailed with a curious timidity as she entered the attractive dining room, done in green and white, with its array of small tables, at which were seated the majority of the household of the Hall. Outwardly calm to indifference, her heart beat a trifle faster as she paused just inside the doorway, uncertain where to seat herself. A tall, slender, brown-eyed girl whose plain white blouse and neat black skirt bespoke the waitress, advanced to meet her. "Will you come with me, please," she said. "I will assign you to your regular seat at table." Although she smiled faintly as she spoke, there was an air of subdued melancholy about her which keen-eyed Jane was quick to note.

"Thank you." Stirred by some unknown impulse, Jane's studied reserve relaxed in a win-

ning smile. The gray eyes met the brown squarely, and in that one comprehensive glance each girl found a friend.

The table, near an open window, at which Jane sat down was already occupied by two young women who nodded to her in pleasant fashion. One of them was a vivacious brunette, whose piquant face fairly irradiated sunny smiles. The other was a fair-haired girl with eyes as gray as Jane's. Jane had a dim recollection of having seen her before. At least she bore a faint resemblance to some one she had known.

"Good morning," greeted the fair-haired girl. "I was wondering where you were. I saw you for a moment yesterday, but before I had time to introduce myself, Mrs. Weatherbee marched you off. After that you disappeared most effectually. I am Dorothy Martin of the junior class and this is Edith Hammond, a most worthy sophomore."

"I am glad to know you." Jane spoke with decided cordiality. She was greatly attracted to both girls. Then, too, considering she had decided to try to like college, she intended to make herself as agreeable as possible. "My name is Jane Allen, and I am from Montana."

"You're a long way from home." The viva-

cious girl smiled brightly, and looked prettier than ever. "You have the honor to be the only far Westerner at the Hall. You do rather suggest the West, too."

"In what way do I suggest the West?" Jane asked the question rather abruptly.

Her imperative tone brought a faint color to the other's cheeks. For an instant her smile vanished. Then it reappeared as she replied lightly, "I'm afraid I can't quite answer that. It's just my impression of you, I suppose. I've never been West, but I've read a great deal about it, and—well—you seem to have a kind of independence about you that makes one think of mountains and vast distances. Oh, I can't explain what I do mean," she ended rather confusedly.

"I think I understand what Edith means." Dorothy Martin's gray eyes regarded Jane with kindly interest. "She is really paying you a compliment. You must have had a wonderful trip across country."

"It was rather uneventful to me. You see, I didn't care to come here to college, so the journey east wasn't particularly exciting." Jane was inwardly surprised to find herself making this frank admission. Then she suddenly understood. The calm face of this splendid girl re-

minded her of her mother's. And her name was Dorothy, too. Jane immediately felt adoration rise within her. Yes, she was sure to like Dorothy Martin. Some day, when she knew her better, she would tell her of the resemblance. But not yet.

"Not care to come to Wellington!" cried Edith Hammond, arching her dark brows. "You won't feel that way after you've been here for a while."

"Perhaps not." Jane's dubious inflection was politely contradictory. She realized it as she spoke, but a strain of sheer perversity in her prompted the reply. She knew that she could not expect to become friendly with these girls as long as she persisted in it. "Now that I'm here, I hope I shall like college," she amended rather hastily.

"That rests entirely with you," was Dorothy Martin's serious response. "A freshman is a pioneer and to her college is a new country. If she is brave and resourceful she soon makes a home for herself and tries in every way to improve the claim she has taken up. Of course she is bound to meet with plenty of obstacles, big and little, but if she makes up her mind to remove them, she is sure to do it, and this strange new country becomes dearer to her every day."

Jane's face kindled into vivid interest as she listened. Dorothy's forceful comparison had sunk deeper than she knew. The idea of being a pioneer appealed immensely to Jane's imagination. "I think that's a splendid way to look at it," she nodded. "I shall always remember what you have said."

Before Dorothy could reply the girl who had shown Jane to her seat approached with a tray and served her with the cereal with which the breakfast began.

"Will you bring me another cup of coffee, Norma?" asked Dorothy, smiling pleasantly at the waitress.

The girl's sad face brightened. "With pleasure," she replied.

Dorothy passed a few words of friendly conversation with her, to which she responded with evident delight.

Edith Hammond's red lips took on a slight pout as the waitress turned away. "How can you be so chummy with that girl, Dot?" she asked petulantly. "You have really spoiled her. She acts as though she owned the earth."

"Please don't, Edith." Dorothy's calm features grew suddenly stern.

Edith's expression of displeasure deepened.

"Why shouldn't I say what I think?" she demanded hotly. "It's all very commendable in her to be working her way through college, but it doesn't follow that one needs to make her an intimate friend. I believe in being civil, but I think it's a mistake to go out of one's class for a mere nobody. Don't you agree with me, Miss Allen?" she turned expectantly to Jane. This haughty stranger, who bore the unmistakable evidence of affluence, was sure to prove an ally.

"No, I don't." Jane laid marked emphasis upon her reply. "She seems to be a very sweet girl, and if she is working her way through college she deserves a lot of credit. It's not fine clothes or riches that count. It's the heart." Unconsciously Jane repeated her father's oft-spoken sentiment.

"Shake hands on that!" Dorothy reached an impulsive hand across the table. In that brief handclasp the two met on common ground and Jane made another friend who was destined to stand loyally by her through good and evil report.

"You are both hopeless." Edith laughed mirthlessly, shrugging her graceful shoulders in disapproval. Though she appeared to treat the matter lightly, there was an angry sparkle in her

brown eyes. She found that she was far from being pleased with this abrupt newcomer, whose remarks verged continually on rudeness. She had greeted Jane with smiles. She now wished she had been less friendly.

"Edith doesn't truly mean that," laughed Dorothy, with a view to palliating her friend's outspoken snobbishness.

"Of course I mean it." Edith frowned darkly, her vivacious prettiness disappearing like magic. "Sorry I must leave you, but I promised a freshman I met yesterday to show her about the campus. There she goes now. Excuse me, please." She slipped from her chair and hurried toward the dining room door.

Jane's eyes followed her to see her accost Marian Seaton, who was just disappearing through the doorway. She smiled grimly as she saw Marian stop and greet Edith with beaming approbation. "Birds of a feather," was her mental judgment. The memory of Beatrice Horton rose before her. So she had come to life after all, and on Jane's second day at Wellington. It looked, too, as though she needed friends. Very well; she should have at least another firm advocate besides Dorothy Martin.

"Edith is a perfect dear." Jane came back to

her surroundings as Dorothy offered this apology in behalf of her pettish companion. "It's all the fault of her bringing up. Her father is a millionaire and she comes of a very old Philadelphia family. She is an only child, and has always been allowed to do exactly as she pleased. I'm awfully fond of her, but I wish she weren't quite so—so——" she hesitated, "peculiar about some things."

"I understand," was Jane's brief response. It was on her tongue to remark that in Marian Seaton, Edith would undoubtedly find a ready sympathizer. She refrained from saying so, however. She was determined on at least one point. No matter what might be her opinions of the girls with whom her lot had been cast, she would keep them to herself.

CHAPTER IX

FRIENDS AND FOES

DURING the next two days Jane found herself so completely engaged in the ordeal of examinations as to devote very little time to the girls of Madison Hall. Her natural reticence prevented her from falling into the quick acquaintance which is bound to spring up whenever a number of young women are thrown together to remain in one another's company for a long period of time. Discouraged by the icy demeanor Judith Sterns had presented when they found themselves alone together in their room at the end of the first trying day of examinations, Jane had put off the apology she still wished to make. At the end of the second day she grew angry at Judith's stony ignoring of her presence and no longer desired to make it. So far as she was concerned, matters could stand

as they were. Judith sat at the same table with Marian Seaton. No doubt Marian had enlightened her regarding her brief acquaintance with Jane. It was equally probable that she had exaggerated the account. Jane was not troubled by Marian's opinion of her, but she was still slightly remorseful for her cavalier treatment of Judith.

Aside from Dorothy Martin, Edith Hammond and the meek waitress student, whose name was Norma Bennett, she knew no one sufficiently well to be on more than bowing terms. Having been without girl friends all her life, she was now not specially lonely. She was as yet too little used to her new environment to begin longing for the companionship of these Eastern girls, whom she secretly scorned. To pass her examinations was a matter of pride with her. Once she had set her foot forward she could not brook failure. For the sake of the adored dead and the faith of the living, she must not fail. And so the end of her first week at Wellington College found her established among the freshmen pioneers.

The term "pioneer" pleased Jane immensely. She frequently recalled Dorothy's comparison and delighted to think of herself as one who had settled in a new land, determined to win her way

against overwhelming difficulties. It was a most comforting make-believe, and she derived a considerable amount of satisfaction from it. It had been her aunt's wish that she confine herself to the classical course, and the novelty of selecting the various subjects for study and beginning the regular routine of recitation kept her busily occupied. So far as her studies were concerned she was genuinely interested. Her thorough training under Miss Evans, coupled with her alert mind and power of concentration, combined to make her a student who might be depended upon for brilliant recitations.

It was not until Sunday that for the first time since her arrival Jane experienced a decided desire for companionship. At El Capitan, Sunday had always been a day of infinite happiness. Accompanied by her father and aunt, she usually attended the morning service at a church some miles from the ranch. In the afternoon she and her father were in the habit of taking long horseback rides together, eating an al fresco supper, which they took with them, and riding home under the stars.

During the service in the chapel that morning, which she had attended in company with Dorothy Martin, Jane's thoughts had traveled persistently

Westward. The singing of the hymns filled her with wistful longing for her lost home. Wrapped in her own dreams, the religious discourse fell as far-off sounds on her unheeding ears. The moment dinner was over she put into execution a plan which had been in her mind since early morning. The beauty of the day invited a ride on Firefly, who had arrived safely and who was comfortably established in a stable not far from the college. Jane hurried to her room and hastily slipping out of the embroidered pongee frock she had donned in honor of the day, dived into one of her trunks and brought forth her riding clothes.

Half an hour afterward a decorous group of girls who were taking their ease on the veranda of Madison Hall were distinctly astonished to see a russet-haired young woman in ultra-modern riding habit, crop in hand, march past them, down the walk and across the campus. Sufficient unto herself, Jane had no notion of the profound sensation she was destined to make, and went on her way, mercifully unconscious of the buzz of comment she had left behind her.

"Well, of all things!" burst forth Edith Hammond, as she viewed Jane's serenely retreating back.

"The great American cow-girl," giggled Alicia Reynolds maliciously, waving a thin hand in Jane's direction.

"I can't endure that hateful Allen girl," snapped Marian Seaton. "If I had known that she intended coming to Madison Hall, I would have tried to get into another campus house. I met her on the train, you know. I lost my handkerchief and she saw me drop it and brought it to me. She tried awfully hard to be friendly after that, but Mamma didn't like her, so we paid no attention to her. We hadn't the least idea she was coming here until we bumped squarely into her at the station. We rode to the Hall in the same taxicab and she was very rude to us. You remember, don't you, girls?" She turned to Alicia and Maizie Gilbert, who nodded confirmation.

"She sits at our table," remarked Edith, "but I can't say that I like her. She makes a great deal of fuss over that Miss Bennett who waits on us. She only does it to keep on the sunny side of Dorothy. You girls weren't here last year, so I'll have to explain what I mean. Dot is a dear, but she's always taking up with these frumpy persons who are trying to go through college on nothing. She feels sorry for them and

wants to drag them into having good times, regardless of the fact that they are totally unsuited to our standard. She is awfully nice to this Bennett girl, who comes from goodness knows where and hasn't a cent to call her own. Last year Dot took her to the freshman dance, and I wish you might have seen the dress she wore. It was about five years behind the times and couldn't have cost more than four or five dollars at the most. Dorothy is——"

"Well, what is Dorothy?" demanded a laughing voice. Dorothy Martin had stepped out onto the veranda just in time to hear Edith speak her name.

Edith turned pink to the tips of her small ears. "Oh, hello, Dot," she greeted. Casting a sidelong glance of warning toward the others, she said, "We were just speaking of that Miss Allen. Did you see her?"

"Not since dinner." Dorothy shook her head, her gray eyes fixed with grave regard upon Edith's flushed face. She was fully aware that Edith had purposely evaded her question.

Alicia Reynolds' disagreeable giggle broke forth anew. "Wait until Mrs. Weatherbee sees her," she prophesied pertly.

"What do you mean, girls?" Dorothy seated

herself on the top step of the veranda and looked interrogatively toward the group above her.

"She marched out of her about ten minutes ago dressed in a riding habit. It wasn't one of the long-skirted, old-fashioned kind, either. It consisted of high boots, riding breeches and a coat. She looked like a movie actress! And on Sunday, too!" Edith tilted her chin in active scorn at Jane's misdemeanor. "You know how strict Mrs. Weatherbee is about Sunday."

Instead of being shocked at this revelation, Dorothy's musical laugh rang out. "I think that is really funny!" she exclaimed. "It's worthy of the freshman grind book. Poor Jane! She hadn't the least idea that she was doing anything out of the ordinary."

"I fail to see anything funny about it," cut in Marian Seaton acridly. "She must have known that no one who has the slightest respect for Sunday or Mrs. Weatherbee's good opinion would think of going horseback riding to-day. I'm only a freshman, but I can respect traditions, at least. But of course, being brought up in the wild and woolly West, she is probably ignorant of a great deal she ought to know."

"I am quite sure that Miss Allen had no idea of proceeding contrary to Mrs. Weatherbee's

wishes," returned Dorothy quietly. Her even tones hinted of rebuke.

"I don't believe she knew," broke in Judith Stearns, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation. Honest to the core, Judith resented Marian's arraignment of Jane. Her own private differences were for the moment forgotten. "Miss Allen had a little disagreement with Mrs. Weatherbee about her room on her first day here. Since then I imagine she hasn't been haunting Mrs. Weatherbee's office to inquire into her likes and dislikes."

"Disagreements seem to be her specialty," drawled Maizie Gilbert. "So far as I can learn she has been on the outs with everyone since she came. That is, everyone she knows. Her royal highness hasn't deigned to trouble herself to get acquainted."

"Oh, she is a friend of Miss Bennett's," snickered Alicia with spiteful mirth.

"She is my friend, too," announced Dorothy gravely. She rose as she made this statement. "I don't wish to be critical, but I think it is hardly fair in any one of you to speak so slightingly of a person you hardly know. Jane Allen may have peculiar sides to her nature which as yet none of us can possibly understand. Until

we do know more of her it is not right to criticize. Speaking of traditions, one of Wellington's finest is 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' Personally, I like her very much. Some day I think you will find yourselves in a position to agree with me." Without further words, Dorothy walked across the veranda and disappeared into the house.

"I suppose as humble freshmen we should consider ourselves properly rebuked," sneered Maizie Gilbert.

"*You* may, if you choose," flung back Marian Seaton derisively. "All the upper class students of Wellington can't make me alter *my* opinion. I detest that Miss Allen and I am perfectly frank in admitting it. I'm surprised at your standing up for her, Judith, after the way she has treated you."

It was Judith's turn to color. In the heat of her resentment against Jane, she had rashly confided her woes to Marian, whom she had sworn to secrecy. Marian's deliberate betrayal of her confidence made her very angry.

"Tell us about it, Judy," begged Alicia Reynolds, in gleeful anticipation of more gossip. She was not keen enough to note Judith's plainly ruffled feathers. Of the type who rush into in-

timacy in a day, she had already shortened Judith's name. Now she entreated her with confident familiarity.

"I have nothing to tell," Judith spoke with cold finality. "What I said to Miss Seaton was in strict confidence. I am sorry now that I said it. However, it will teach me to keep my personal affairs to myself in future." Flashing angry reproach at Marian, Judith rose from her chair and marched into the house, her head very erect.

"Miss Allen's influence seems to be extending itself to her roommate," commented Edith Hammond dryly. "What did Miss Stearns tell you, Marian? Having proved yourself a faithless confidante, you might as well live up to your crime."

Edith's flippant words lashed the already nettled Marian to further irritation. Judith's exposure of her breach of confidence was decidedly humiliating to her. No girl likes to be reminded publicly that she cannot keep a secret. She was too shrewd not to know that were she to acquire a reputation for indiscriminate talking she would never be able to live it down.

"Judith Stearns had no reason to accuse me of breaking my word," she declared resentfully. "I merely reminded her that this Allen person had

been hateful to her. I had no intention of saying anything further than that about it."

"That means you won't tell us," smiled Edith, faint scorn flickering in her eyes.

"Certainly not." Marian assumed an air of virtuous dignity. "I hope I am not quite so treacherous as all that."

"Noble little Marian," praised Maizie Gilbert. "Of course we know you wouldn't break your word. Let's drop the subject for something more pleasant."

Marian cast a sharp glance at Maizie. Her imperturbable features seemed to indicate her good faith in the former. Maizie was merely biding her time, however. As Marian's roommate and friend of long standing, she had few illusions regarding her. She knew that, once in the privacy of their room, she, at least, was certain to learn every word that Judith had said.

"I'm sure *I'd* rather talk about something else," Marian said half sullenly. "Suppose we four take a walk around the campus. There doesn't appear to be anything more exciting to do. I hate Sunday—when one has to spend it like this."

"I'll take you over to Preston House and introduce you to the crowd there," volunteered

Edith. "Two of my intimate friends, juniors, room on the second floor. They have a piano and always entertain on Sunday afternoons."

"That will be fine," glowed Marian. "I am anxious to make friends among the upper class girls. Most of the freshmen I've met so far are anything but interesting. I'll be glad when I'm a sophomore."

"So will I," echoed Alicia Reynolds eagerly. She made it a point always to agree with Marian. She had a wholesome respect for the latter's pretensions.

The four girls left the veranda to stroll arm in arm across the broad green campus. In the matter of ideas, they were well matched. Meeting on the level of pure snobbery, they, as well as proud, misjudged Jane Allen, were fated to learn during their fours years at Wellington a number of things which did not appear in the curriculum of study of that college.

CHAPTER X

THE LETTER THAT WAS NOT MAILED

BUT while the group on the veranda were airing their opinions of her, Jane was enjoying the first taste of happiness that had been hers since her arrival at Wellington. Allowed unlimited liberty at home, it had not occurred to her that, in following the dictates of her own will, she was outraging Sunday propriety. At El Capitan she had worshipped God in the open. Her reverence for sacred things invariably deepened with each long Sunday ride that she and her father took together. To wonder at and to worship the grandeur of Nature was to be in tune with the Infinite. Her loftiest emotions and highest aspirations had been born of the earnest talks she and her father had engaged in, as they rode side by side, perfect comrades of the trail.

Her impulse to mount Firefly and flee, for a brief time, from the unpleasantness of her surroundings had prompted her to go for a ride that Sunday afternoon. Once out in the beautiful stretch of country beyond Chesterford, she would have space to breathe and opportunity to think and grow strong of spirit.

Firefly's delight at the touch of her soft hand on his nervous head was only equalled by her joy in having him to herself again. Weary of his dull stable quarters, he behaved like a frisky young puppy let out to gambol on the grass for the first time. His little feet fairly flew over the dusty country road, and Jane swept along, intoxicated with the joy of living which for a long, doleful week had been denied her. How many miles she rode, she did not know, neither did she care. An expert trail-maker, it was easy for her to keep track of her course, and she knew that when she decided to turn back she would have no difficulty in making the return to the college.

Reaching a bit of woods where a narrow road wound its way in and out among the trees, she explored it for a short distance. The sound of gurgling water urged her onward and at the edge of a shallow brook that chattered musically along its stony course, she dismounted and al-

lowed Firefly to refresh himself with a long drink of the clear, sparkling water. He waded to the middle of it and, tossing his head, neighed an invitation for her to follow him.

"Can't do it, old dear," laughed Jane. "My wading days are over until next summer. That's a long way off, and you and I will have to be patient until then. We came to college to live and learn, and we're learning altogether too fast for comfort," she added a trifle bitterly. "The best we can do is to console each other and see things through. As long as I have you, I don't care much about the others."

Jane said this very bravely, but immediately her face fell. Out there in the stillness, broken only by the complaining brook, she realized that she had not spoken truthfully. For some unknown reason she had begun to care very much. But why? was her silent question. The companionship of girls of her own age had never before seemed necessary to her scheme of life. Now that she was among them she did not like them, and they did not like her. Jane paused to consider this last thought. It did not ring true, for there were now two persons whom she decided that she liked very well. One was Norma Bennett; the other, Dorothy Martin. She experienced a swift

warm rush of fellowship for Dorothy. What a splendid girl she was! And how kind and comforting she had been to the lonely outlander, herself. And there in the silent wild Jane developed her first "crush," which was eventually to change her entire point of view.

It was well toward sunset when she rode into the stable yard, and after seeing Firefly safely to his limited quarters, walked slowly back to Madison Hall. She glanced indifferently toward the deserted veranda as she strolled up the walk to the steps. Once inside the hall, sounds from the dining room proclaimed the fact that the Sunday night supper was on. Hungry by reason of her ride, Jane hastened up the stairs to change her riding clothes for the pongee gown, and descend presently to her supper.

"Miss Allen!" A stern voice, freighted with disapproval, caused Jane to wheel about when half-way down the hall. The voice belonged to Mrs. Weatherbee. In her black satin gown, her placid face a study in outraged dignity, she appeared to the astonished Jane to tower above her like an avenging deity.

"You wished to speak to me?" Jane inquired, without moving from where she had halted. She wondered vaguely as to what was impending, but

she controlled her face to show no sign of curiosity. It would take more than this exhibition of displeasure on the part of the matron to intimidate *her*.

"Have you forgotten that to-day is *Sunday?*" Mrs. Weatherbee's tones indicated that a sacrilege had been committed.

"Certainly not." Jane elevated her chin and gazed levelly at her questioner. "It would be hard to forget."

"Nevertheless your memory seems to be treacherous," retorted the older woman. "I can hardly credit the fact that one of my girls should have deliberately ignored the day to go horseback riding."

Jane's gray eyes widened in genuine amazement. So this was what it all meant. "I was not aware that it was forbidden," she returned, striving to control the temper which threatened to rise at this unlooked-for rebuke. "At home, my father and I always ride on Sunday."

"But you are not at home," reminded Mrs. Weatherbee, her stern features relaxing a little. She found herself confronting a situation on which she had not reckoned. Just to a degree, she could now hardly doubt the innocence of Jane's motive. The girl had not intended dis-

obedience. She was simply ignorant of the conventions. "It is quite proper that you should ride, my dear, if you wish," she explained in a milder tone, "but not on Sunday. At Wellington——"

"Is it forbidden in the rules of the college?" was Jane's curt interruption.

"Not in the rules of the college, but——"

"Then I see no reason why I should not ride my horse on Sunday if I choose," cut in Jane laconically.

Sheer vexation prevented Mrs. Weatherbee from answering. Never, during her long experience with girls, had she encountered one who so aggravated her. The indifferent contempt with which Jane met her well-meant admonition aroused in her a feeling of animosity quite foreign to her usual serenity. Confident of her power to compel obedience by the merest show of displeasure, it irritated her beyond measure to be thus coolly defied.

"Have you no regard for my wishes?" she asked, her tones quivering with exasperation.

"Every regard, if they are reasonable." Jane was privately astonished at her own reply. "I cannot understand, however, why you should object to a perfectly harmless recreation," she went

on boldly. "My father says that it is the spirit in which one does things that counts. I went riding to-day on purpose to get away from this stupid, narrow life of the East, where I am hardly allowed to breathe. For certain reasons I must learn to endure it, but no one can hope to teach me reason by forbidding me to do what harms neither myself nor anyone else. Oh, I hate it all!" Jane accompanied her vehement exclamation with a gesture of loathing that patently included the woman who had presumed to interfere, and turning ran down the hall into her room, slamming the door behind her.

Mrs. Weatherbee's first impulse was to pursue her and, demanding admittance to her room, lay down the law with unsparing severity. She did not yield to it. Instead she proceeded in the opposite direction. It came to her with disagreeable force that were she to put the matter before the dean, she might meet with defeat. Miss Rutledge was a Californian, with the distinct atmosphere of the West about her. She would perhaps treat the affair lightly. Mrs. Weatherbee herself was a New England woman of the old school. She had little sympathy with the outdoor sports which the girl of to-day finds so necessary to her happiness. Jane's mannish riding

clothes had shocked her far more than the girl's disregard for the Sabbath. She prudently decided to think well before taking further steps toward managing the recalcitrant Jane. But her active disapproval of the latter now deepened into a rooted dislike which later she took small pains to conceal.

Jane burst into her room to encounter Judith Sterns in the act of leaving it. The two girls collided with a force that sent Judith reeling backward.

"I beg your pardon. I hope I did not hurt you," Jane made frowning apology. She was not in the least out of sorts with Judith. Her lowering brows were the result of her recent interview with Mrs. Weatherbee.

But again Fate appeared to connive to keep the two apart. Judith translated Jane's frown as pertaining solely to her. When she had angrily left the veranda, she had resolved to make a speedy peace with Jane. The unkind criticism of Marian and her friends had served to disgust her with them. Dorothy's defense of Jane had sunk deep. If Dorothy found Jane likeable, she, too, would try to know her better. After all, she could not blame Jane for being provoked over her room. Perhaps Jane had not seen her

that first day on the campus. Judith recalled guiltily that Jane *had* bowed to her when she entered Rutherford Inn, and had been rebuffed. Several times the latter had seemed to be on the point of making friendly overtures. And she, Judith, had pretended not to see them.

Noting Jane's absence at supper, Judith had hurried through the meal and to her room. When her roommate returned she would apologize to her for ignoring her salutation that day. Perhaps they might come to a frank understanding that would serve to draw them together. That would be Dorothy's way of adjusting the difficulty. Judith had also become devoted to the pretty junior.

Jane's violent entrance, coupled with her curt apology and frowning face, completely upset Judith's plan of tender reconciliation. With a freezing, "I am not hurt, thank you," she switched from the room, with the conviction that Marian could hardly be blamed for disliking this rude Westerner, and that Dorothy would undoubtedly discover in time that her idol was made of very common clay.

As for Jane, the moment the door closed behind Judith, her belligerence fell from her like a cloak. Dropping down on a little stool, she drew

off one riding boot, stared savagely at it and hurled it across the room. It just missed sailing through the open window, struck the casing with a thud and landed on the floor beside it. In her misery, Jane laughed rather hysterically. The laugh ended in a sob. Throwing herself face downward on the floor, she cried as though her stubborn heart would break.

Fortunately for her, Judith did not return. Finally quieting her grief, she picked herself up and began a spiritless removal of the other boot. Surveying it dully, she went on undressing. Her desire for supper had vanished. Arraying herself in a soft blue silk negligé, she began a search for her fountain pen and note paper. Seating herself at the table which served the purpose of a desk, she wrote:

"DADDY DEAR:

"I can't stand it. Please let me come home. If you only knew how horrible everything here is, you'd fly to rescue me from this miserable place. I've tried, but everything goes wrong. No one understands me and no one cares to. I know that if Dearest were alive she would say——"

Jane paused abruptly, her pen poised above the paper. What if somewhere in the Infinite her mother saw and knew. If so, what then must be her thoughts? Surely she would not blame her own little girl for all that had happened. And yet—— Had she honestly tried to do her very best? Dorothy Martin's earnest speech, "That rests entirely with you," rang in her ears. What was it she had said about being brave and resourceful? Word for word she recalled that one sentence: "Of course she is bound to meet with plenty of obstacles, big and little, but if she makes up her mind to remove them, she is sure to do it."

With an impetuous sweep of her hand, Jane whisked the sheet of paper from the table. Tearing it across, she tossed it into the near-by waste-basket. Seizing her pen, she began on a fresh sheet:

"DEAREST DAD:

"Here is a good-night message to you from a verdant freshman.

"I went for a long ride on Firefly to-day and all the time I wished you were with me. I am trying to like college, and I suppose I shall be really in love with it about the time

I graduate. At any rate, I'm living and learning as you said I must. There is a splendid girl here named Dorothy Martin. She looks a little like Dearest, and she has been very sweet to me. Dad, I wish you would send me the portrait of Mother that hangs in my room. I need it to help me be a pioneer. Dorothy says freshmen are pioneers and that it rests with them whether they can be good settlers in the new country of college. Some time I hope to bring her home with me to dear old Capitan.

"Firefly is in fine condition, only he hates to be shut up in a stable. I shall take him out for an airing as often as I can. Give my love to Aunt Mary and tell her I'll write soon. Give Donabar a pat and an apple for me. With my dearest love to you,

"Your fighting pioneer,

"JANE."

As Jane folded her letter and slipped it into the envelope, a curious peace descended upon her. She had not given up, after all. How much more pleased her father would be at this second letter, that contained no hint of defeat. Rising from the table, she walked to the window and

looked out on the calm starlit night. As she lingered, dreamily wondering what the future held in store for her, she saw a taxicab roll up the drive. A girl skipped nimbly out of it before it came to a full stop. In the moonlight Jane could see her quite plainly. She was small and slender and dark, and moved with incredible lightness. She turned a lovely impish face directly toward Jane, as she proceeded up the walk, followed by a luggage-laden chauffeur. As Jane had held small communication with the majority of the Madison Hall girls, she had no idea as to whom the newcomer might be. But in the brief glimpse Jane caught of her she realized that this elfish little person was totally different from any girl she had seen thus far. It was as though she had slipped suddenly from a stray moonbeam and landed in front of Madison Hall, rather than descended from a prosaic taxicab. "She looks different," was Jane's thought. "I hope she won't be like the others." She watched her in fascination until she disappeared from view. Then she turned from the window, little dreaming that the attractive stranger was one day to fill a very large place in her college life.

CHAPTER XI

A PLEDGE OF FRIENDSHIP

ALTHOUGH Jane had fought another battle with self and come out victor, she was imbued with anything but the spirit of a conqueror as she took her place at breakfast the following morning. Thus far there had been a vacant chair at the table which she shared with Dorothy Martin and Edith Hammond. She had observed that all the other tables in the room seated from four to six girls. Several times she had wondered if Madison Hall were not yet full to capacity and if the vacant place were destined to hold some late arrival. She had asked no questions, however, even of Dorothy. Trained to use her own eyes to the best advantage, Jane scorned to resort to interrogation in order to satisfy her curiosity regarding the members of the household of the Hall. Of an impersonal

nature, she resented being questioned; therefore she took good care not to inflict her queries upon anyone else. Whatever she could not find out for herself about people she preferred to let go.

Then, too, she had vowed never to give Edith Hammond the satisfaction of learning that she was in the least interested in what went on at Wellington. During the brief time in which the three were thrown together at meals, she addressed her remarks principally to Dorothy. She did not like Edith, and Edith had evinced small fondness for her. Although Edith showed evident preference for Dorothy, she and Marian Seaton had lately become very friendly, and she was frequently to be seen in the latter's company. Whole-souled Dorothy tried, in her earnest, kindly fashion, to bridge the rapidly yawning gap between her table companions, but it proved an uphill task. They found plenty to say to her, but little or nothing to say to each other.

Jane was distinctly relieved as she slipped into her chair to find herself alone at table. For once she had a question to ask, but it was for Norma Bennett's ears. As the latter came smilingly up to her with a pleasant, "Good morning," Jane began in her abrupt fashion: "Who is the girl

who arrived last night after supper? I saw her from my window. I thought you might know about her."

"Oh, yes. I do know. Her name is Adrienne Dupree. She is rooming with Miss Lacey, and she will be placed at your table when she comes down to breakfast. I haven't seen her yet, but I knew she was expected last night. What does she look like, Miss Allen?" Norma had never presumed to address Jane other than formally. Poverty had taught her that, for herself, reserve was always wisest.

"I caught only a glimpse of her. She is very small and pretty. She looked like a sprite in the moonlight last night." Jane was unaware of the enthusiasm in her voice.

Norma noticed it, however, and mentally hoped that this newcomer would be nice to Jane. This proud, reserved girl seemed so alone. No one except herself and Dorothy Martin appeared interested in her. She was rich. She wore beautiful clothes and carried herself like a young princess. Yet—— Norma's cogitations came to a sudden end. Edith Hammond was approaching the table. "I must go," she murmured, and walked quickly away.

"Good morning," Edith greeted Jane coldly.

"Good morning." Jane's salutation held an equal amount of ice.

Neither made any attempt at conversation. Norma served the breakfast and they proceeded to eat in silence.

"Oh, good morning, Jane." Dorothy Martin put in a breezy appearance. "Did you enjoy your ride yesterday?" Her gray eyes twinkled.

Jane looked up with a frown. It changed to a sudden smile as she read genuine amusement in Dorothy's eyes. "Very much, thank you," she returned demurely. Then they both laughed outright. Although Dorothy did not know of the scene with Mrs. Weatherbee, she guessed that the news of Jane's ride had not escaped that worthy woman's ears.

"Do you ride?" asked Jane suddenly.

"No; I wish I knew how. It's splendid exercise. You'll laugh, I suppose, but I'm rather afraid of horses. Father would like me to have a horse."

"Let me teach you to ride," Jane offered eagerly. "You can learn on Firefly. He's as gentle as can be. I have two habits here, and you are about my height. Either of them would fit you."

"Oh, will you teach me?" It was Dorothy's turn to grow eager. "When can we begin?"

The two girls fell into an energetic discussion of Jane's proposal. The fact that Dorothy was anxious to become her pupil was of sufficient interest to cause Jane to forget the presence of a third person.

Edith Hammond's changeful face wore an expression of patent chagrin as the talk went on. She did not wish Dorothy and Jane to become friends. Dorothy was by far the most popular girl in the junior class, and Edith felt that she had a special claim on the pretty junior's attention. It was all very well for Dorothy to make it pleasant for the freshmen, but it was not necessary for her to become chummy with any of them, particularly this detestable Allen girl. She hoped Dorothy would not invite her to the freshman dance. It looked as though Jane was exerting herself to be agreeable with that end in view. The coming dance being just now an important topic of conversation, she knew no doubt that owing to the fact that 19— was the largest freshman class for some years, the seniors and juniors had agreed to help out as escorts. Aside from Norma Bennett, who didn't count socially, Dorothy was Jane's only hope in the way of an escort.

Edith's sulky reflections took wing as her eyes wandered to the entrance to the dining room. A

mite of a girl had paused on the threshold. Not more than five feet in height and boyishly slender, her small head running over with short, blue-black curls, she looked like a child masquerading in young women's clothes. Her large black eyes sparkled with mischievous interest, as they darted here and there. Her clear, white skin, small straight nose and the vivid coloring of her curved red lips combined to make a face of unusual beauty. Her smart little one-piece frock of white pongee reached just to the tops of her tiny white kid shoes. As she stood in the doorway she made a charming picture.

"Look, Dorothy!" Edith was glad of a chance to interrupt the conversation of her companions. "There's Miss Dupree. I saw her last night when she first came. Isn't she a darling?"

Jane's glance followed Dorothy's in the direction of the door, just in time to see Norma Bennett approach the stranger and lead her toward their table. Mrs. Weatherbee, who rarely breakfasted with her household, had directed Norma to look after the newcomer and introduce her to her tablemates. From Jane and Dorothy, Norma knew she might expect courtesy, but Edith Hammond might misunderstand her effort to carry out instructions as an attempt to overstep the

line of caste she had drawn so sharply between herself and one who was obliged to work her way through college.

"Miss Dupree, this is Miss Martin," she began a trifle nervously. She then named the other two young women, and with a timid, "Mrs. Weatherbee asked me to introduce Miss Dupree," walked quickly away without looking back to see how Edith had regarded her temerity.

"We have been wondering what you would be like," was Dorothy's opening speech. "You fill the last empty niche in Madison Hall. We are now a complete household."

"I have the bad habit of being always last when I ought to be first," shrugged the fascinating little girl. "Since first *ma mère* said, 'Adrienne must go to college,' ah! how I ruined my voice explaining that for me the student life was too sad. But *ma mère* had the original ideas of her own. So—I am here." She made a gesture of deprecation that was as purely French as her name.

A gleam of interest shot into Jane's eyes at this naïve confession. Here was some one else who didn't like college.

"I wept. I shrieked. I raved. I implored," went on Miss Dupree dramatically. "Poor old

Blacky made the great fuss, too. Blacky is of a truth my governess and for many years. She wept also many tears. There were such sad partings! You may believe it." She rolled her black eyes as though to express the precise degree of sorrow of her governess. "So far, I have seen nothing of an excitement here, but the worst is yet to come." She cast an impish glance about the table that brought ready smiles from her listeners.

"Oh, you only imagine you are not going to like college," Dorothy assured her. "We have the best kind of times here." Dorothy did not adopt the serious tone which she had used to comfort Jane. This elfish young person required a different method of treatment.

"Do you really?" The black eyes opened very wide. "If it is so, then I shall play around awhile in this huge college and see what happens."

"You are from New York City, are you not?" inquired Edith with polite interest. Judging from appearance, Adrienne Dupree was a spoiled darling of luxury.

"Indeed I am," came the quick response. "There is no place in the world like it! It is a great pleasure to see the dear old town after one has traveled about the big world for a long time.

It makes happiness." Unconsciously she had dropped into an idiom purely of the French.

"Have you traveled much?" Edith questioned curiously.

"Almost all my life. You cannot be of the profession and sit by your own fireside, you know. But of course you do not know. That is, you know nothing of me. I had better begin; then I shall enlighten you. You may be shocked. I cannot be sad if you are. Frankness is the soul of virtue, though. Is it not?" She did not wait for an affirmative, but rattled on. "My mother is Eloise Dupree. Now do you understand?"

"I do," nodded Jane, her somber face lighting to actual beauty. "I saw her dance last winter in Denver. She is wonderful." Jane's voice held a note of awed admiration.

"Then you must have seen me. I was one of the poppies in 'Midsummer' and a fairy in the 'Princess of Illusion.' That is why I am so cross because I must go to school. I wish to keep on dancing and become famous like *ma mère*. But no, little Adrienne must go to college. Hard indeed for little Adrienne."

"I've heard and read a great deal of Eloise Dupree," said Dorothy warmly. "She is world famous as an artiste, I believe. Her interpreta-

tions are marvelous. And to think that her daughter is to have Wellington for her Alma Mater! It's the most interesting thing I've heard since I came back to college." Dorothy beamed her enthusiasm.

"You are too sweet for anything." The little girl flushed with genuine pride at this praise of her mother. "There are many stupid persons who have not the understanding of the profession. They seem to think it a—a—disgrace to use the talents God gave one in order to give pleasure to others," she went on quickly. "Not that I would care the least little bit if any of the girls here were to be horrid to me, because, like *ma mère,* I have danced. It is an honor. I am very proud of it."

"Why shouldn't you be proud of it?" demanded Jane. "You ought to be glad that you are different from ordinary, everyday persons."

"Now you speak the truth," encouraged the mite. "I *am* glad. I will tell you a great secret. I have never cared for the girls of my own age. I have been always with my parents. *Mon père* is the business manager, you know."

"I never cared for girls, either," confessed Jane, "until I met Dorothy. I wish the rest of the Wellingtonites were like her." It may be set

down to Jane's credit that her impulsive remark was not intended to offend Edith Hammond. In the interest of the moment she had forgotten the sophomore's existence.

"Thank you for your very frank opinion of me, Miss Allen." Edith's voice quivered with sarcasm. "It doesn't surprise me in the least."

"I was not——" Jane paused. Her brows drew together in an ugly frown. She was about to state that she meant nothing personal. Then she changed her mind. If Edith chose to misconstrue the remark, she was privileged to do so. Jane had not purposed insult, but her dislike for Edith choked back her budding apology. What she did say hardly mended matters. "Pardon me, I forgot you were present," she drawled indifferently.

Anger robbed Edith of a fitting retaliation. With a contemptuous toss of her head, she rose. Ignoring Jane, she smiled rather patronizingly at Adrienne. "I'm so glad I met you, Miss Dupree," she said sweetly. "Sorry I can't stay, but I must see a friend before my first recitation. I'll drop in on you later, Dot."

"Amiable child," mocked Miss Dupree lightly, the moment Edith's back was turned. "She is shocked. I read it in her eye. What is the col-

lege coming to, I wonder, to take in the stray dancer that she may acquire knowledge?" Adrienne's animated features assumed an expression of horrified disapproval that provoked laughter. It was not against Edith, however. It was born merely of the French girl's droll mimicry of outraged propriety.

Unluckily Edith Hammond had glanced back in time to see Jane and Dorothy laugh. The red of hurt pride stung her cheeks as she left Madison Hall. They should pay, all three of them, for their ridicule of her. Dorothy would find that it was not wise to preach one thing and practise another. As for Jane Allen and that impertinent little dancer—they would be sorry, too. She would go straight to Miss Rutledge and tell her that she, for one, objected to the latter's presence in college. Better still, she would have a talk with Mrs. Weatherbee. She would understand and together they would put the matter before the dean. Sooner or later the chance would come to even her score with Jane Allen, too.

"You are a very droll youngster," said Dorothy indulgently, "but I am afraid your frankness will get you into trouble if you are not careful. Please don't think I am trying to be a

goody-goody or give you a lecture. As a staid junior I have the privilege of counseling my little freshman sister. Edith Hammond is a delightful girl, as you will soon learn. We have been friends since first I knew her."

"Appearances *are* sometimes deceitful," acknowledged Adrienne with naughty emphasis. "But there, forgive me." She slipped from sarcasm to pretty penitence. "If she is *your* friend, I promise to like her, to please you. That is, if she will allow me to do so."

"I don't believe she can help herself." Dorothy returned Adrienne's implied compliment with fond sincerity. She was greatly attracted toward this tiny, colorful person. "Your roommate, Ethel Lacey, seems nice. I haven't had time to call on her yet." Dorothy resolutely turned the talk from Edith. She was inwardly provoked at Edith's attack upon Jane, but her calm face betrayed no sign of it.

With the strain of Edith's presence removed, however, the remainder of the meal passed off pleasantly enough. Jane finished her breakfast first, but she lingered at the table, fascinated by Adrienne Dupree.

"I suppose my first duty is to hold the interview with the registrar. I hope she will not cause

me to feel of the height of two inches, or perhaps gobble me up." Adrienne made an impish grimace. "I'm to be a special victim of examinations, it seems."

"Shall I take you to her?" proposed Jane. "My first recitation is Livy, and it doesn't come until ten. You can go to chapel with Dorothy and me, then afterward we can go on to Wellington Hall."

"Very fine and truly hospitable," accepted Adrienne gaily. "Does chapel mean morning devotions?"

"It does," smiled Dorothy, "and you must be very good and as quiet as a mouse, or the faculty won't like you."

"Perhaps I shall not like the faculty," dimpled Adrienne.

"It's your duty to, unless you're conditioned. Then your lack of devotion will be excusable."

Jane and Dorothy felt themselves to be actual giants as they crossed the campus to the chapel with the diminutive Adrienne between them. At the door Dorothy left them to take her place among the juniors. Jane and Adrienne found seats in the pews reserved for the freshman class.

During the short devotional service, the French girl was a model of discreet silence. Her bright

eyes, however, kept up a constant roving over the rows of students, and like all impressionable persons of her type she drew quantities of conclusions concerning them.

"I'm glad *that's* over," she announced with a sigh of relief as the two complex children of impulse, so opposite in nature, yet so alike in spirit, left the chapel to go to Wellington Hall. "I hate being solemn. I like to laugh and sing and dance. Oh, how I love to dance!" She paused in the middle of the campus and clasped her small hands in fervent ecstacy.

"Chapel always makes me feel blue," was Jane's gloomy comment.

"What's the matter with you?" Adrienne had now resumed her walk at Jane's side. "You are —oh—you have the unhappy look, as *mon père* would say. Is it because you hate this college? You said at the breakfast table that you did not wish to come here. Where do you live? In the wide West, I suppose. You spoke of Denver. I always remember everything I hear."

Jane spoke briefly of herself and her home. Yet she told Adrienne more than she had admitted to anyone else since her arrival.

"I see the reason, indeed." Adrienne gave Jane's arm a reassuring pat. "But never mind."

Her quaint phrasing was reminiscent of her foreign parentage. "Be of good cheer. I had the feeling of liking for you, the minute my eyes saw you. You are nicer even than the Dorothy girl. We are both of the same mind. Let us be great friends. *Je vous aime. Je vous ador. Que voulez vous encore?*" She stopped again, holding out her small hands to Jane in a pretty gesture of invitation.

Jane caught them in a firm clasp. "I'd love to be best friends," she said, deeply moved. And as she pledged herself to friendship, Jane took her first definite step toward being a real girl among girls.

CHAPTER XII

A LOSS THAT PROVED A GAIN

AFTER the advent of Adrienne Dupree into Madison Hall, Jane took a new lease in college life. She no longer felt so unutterably alone. The arrival of the piquant-faced French girl had wrought a welcome change in the tiresome routine to which she was bravely trying to accustom herself. She found it hard to credit that she, the Jane Allen who had scorned the society of girls, should have at last succumbed to it. Over and over she wondered how it had happened that this lovely little person, who overflowed with high-spirited gaiety, should have been attracted to her. Jane was as yet too full of the wrong of being banished from El Capitan to realize her own claim to a type of beauty quite as convincing as Adrienne's. Her regular features, slender, graceful figure and erect, proud bearing combined to make her singularly attract-

ive. But the stubborn, rebellious spirit that dwelt within robbed her fine face of its natural charm, thus repelling rather than attracting those who were forced to concede that she was "stunning," but——

Adrienne, however, rapidly grew in popularity at Madison Hall. Once her trial of examinations had been met and disposed of to her credit, her restless nature demanded a thorough exploration of her habitation and an acquaintance with all who dwelt within its walls. Edith Hammond's indignant protest against her to Mrs. Weatherbee met with no dire results. That august individual was by no means anxious to lay a complaint against the elfish child of the theatre before Miss Rutledge. She sympathized prettily with Edith, thereby showing her own disapproval of Adrienne. She stated with a nice amount of regret that she had learned from Miss Rutledge of a firm friendship that had existed for many years between President Blakesly and Miss Dupree's father. This was equivalent to saying that her hands were tied regarding this newest arrival at the Hall.

Beaten at this point, Edith was forced to drop all thought of ousting Adrienne from Wellington. She therefore turned her attention to a

study of ways and means of making the little girl uncomfortable. She had quickly abandoned her plan to belittle Dorothy Martin in the eyes of her fellow students. Dorothy stood so patently for all of Wellington's highest traditions that to attack her strongly fortified position would mean Edith's ultimate defeat. As freshmen, Jane and Adrienne would be far easier to discredit. Jane had already made several enemies and Adrienne bore the stamp of the theatre. It was splendid capital on which to proceed.

But, in the clever little French girl, she found a foeman worthy of her steel. Brought up in the atmosphere of the theatre, Adrienne had learned to read human nature with surprising accuracy. Born of a people to whom diplomacy is second nature, she divined Edith's intentions and immediately lined up her forces. With the exception of Marian Seaton, Maizie Gilbert and Alicia Reynolds, the girls of Madison Hall flocked to her standard. Her mother's prestige in the world of the fine arts, her friendly footing with the Blakeslys, and lastly her own prettiness and charm were points indisputably in her favor. Then, too, the very fact that she had been on the stage as a professional dancer lent an irresistible glamor to her sayings and doings.

Edith's animosity toward herself she met with a joyous air of innocence that was highly diverting to Jane and Dorothy. But there were occasions when her roguish black eyes could flash forth unmistakable danger signals. Then she would tantalizingly lead Edith on to angry discussion, merely to deliver a lightning thrust that left her gasping. She was quite sufficient unto herself, as Edith discovered to her chagrin, and after several disconcerting encounters, she found it advisable to treat Adrienne civilly.

Jane, however, was a fruitful subject for annoyance. Hers was a nature too intense to meet sneers with laughter, and thus bring about the discomfiture of her who sneered. True, she seldom deigned to reply in kind to Edith's veiled flings, but her lowering brows gave strong hint that she felt the sting. Privately, Adrienne had begged Jane to allow her to do battle in her behalf. Jane had refused her good offices with a curtness that warned her not to interfere. Despite her fondness for the taciturn Westerner, Adrienne was a trifle afraid of her. At times she was sure she understood Jane. Again she felt that she did not understand her at all.

Due largely to the popular little girl's open fondness for her moody friend, a few of the

Madison Hall contingent made half-hearted advances toward acquaintance with Jane. But the caustic criticism of Marian Seaton and her friends, Edith Hammond's dislike for her, Judith Stearns' wrongs, which Marian had secretly confided to Maizie Gilbert, who had in turn related them to half a dozen others, and Jane's own antagonistic attitude combined to put her in distinct disfavor.

Yet there was one person at Madison Hall who had received a deeper insight into Jane's true disposition than even Adrienne Dupree. That person was Judith Stearns. Quite by chance the key had been placed in her hands. On the Sunday evening when Jane had written her impassioned plea to her father, torn it across and flung it into the wastebasket, she had no notion that eyes other than her own would read it. On that same evening, absent-minded Judith had spent the evening in Ethel Lacey's room, writing a theme for the next day's English. She had remained there until the half-past-ten limit, and hurried to her room, one hand holding the original draft of the theme, the other the finished work. She had crumpled the discarded sheets together and carelessly tossed them into her wastebasket.

On the following morning, after Jane had left the room, Judith had found to her consternation that it was the final copy which she had discarded. A frenzied rummaging of the basket yielded the cherished but badly treated theme. As she brought forth the wrinkled sheets of paper, half of Jane's note came with them. Before she realized that she was perusing strictly private correspondence she had read enough of poor Jane's acknowledgment of defeat to cause her to catch her breath sharply. Honor now awoke; she would not allow herself to search in the basket for the missing half. The potent phrases, "Daddy, dear, I can't stand it," "how horrible everything here is," "miserable place," danced before her eyes and filled her warm heart with an overwhelming sense of pity for her roommate.

She now knew that Jane Allen's indifferent face masked an unhappiness of which she alone had chanced to learn. If Jane had suddenly entered the room, Judith would have flown to comfort her. But as she did not appear, Judith thoughtfully reduced the betraying paper to unreadable bits and dropped them in the basket. In her abstraction over her discovery she picked up a sheet of her theme and was about to demol-

ish it. Providentially catching sight of her own handwriting, she giggled softly at her near blunder and began smoothing out its crumpled folds.

Later, as she hurried across the campus to her English recitation, the rescued theme in her hand, she pondered so deeply over how she might straighten matters with her despondent roommate that she meandered dreamily into the hall where her classroom lay, opened the wrong door and broke in upon a recitation in French, much to the instructor's disgust.

When she and Jane were finally alone together, which was not until just before dinner that evening, Judith tried vainly to think of some way in which she might speak of her discovery. Fear of being misunderstood and accused of prying held her silent. She did not know how to begin or what to say in explanation. So she put off speaking, and, as the autumn days glided by, she could never screw up her courage to say what she wished. But, although she was unconscious of it, Jane's need of a friend had brought her one who was only waiting for an opportunity to declare herself.

Opportunity has a well-known habit of cropping up unexpectedly. Late one afternoon Jane

came hurrying into her room, cheeks aglow, her curls flying. She had just come from a long ride through the crisp fall air on Firefly, and the old joy of living had returned to her with a rush. She was no longer the silent, sullen person who kept everyone at arm's length. She was again the radiant, impulsive Jane of El Capitan, who won her way to whatever she desired by the force of her bubbling high spirits.

An unexpected sight brought her to a quick halt in the middle of the room. Face downward on her bed lay Judith, her shoulders shaking. The unmistakable sound of muffled sobs proceeded from her immediate vicinity.

"What's the matter, Miss Stearns?" The sounds of distress caused Jane to forget herself. She knew only that a fellow being was suffering, and her natural sympathy, which she had hitherto doggedly stifled, rose to the surface.

"It's—g-o-n-e!" wailed Judith, too deeply immersed in her own woes to realize that her hitherto unapproachable roommate was moved by her tears.

"What's gone?" demanded Jane, walking over to where Judith lay. "Have you lost something?"

"Y-e-s." Judith gulped, sighed and slowly

sat up, pushing a refractory lock of hair out of her eyes. "I've lost——" Her lips quivered ominously. "I've lost my locket and chain!"

"Oh!" Jane's sympathy began to ebb. Judith's trouble was nothing serious after all. She could not imagine herself reduced to such a state of grief over a mere bauble. "That is too bad," she said rather lamely. "Was it very valuable?"

Judith nodded. "My mother gave it to me," she returned huskily. Two big tears rolled down her cheeks. "I had it on when I went to English this morning. I'm quite sure I had. I didn't miss it until I started for the Hall. I put my hand to my neck and it—was—g-o-n-e." Judith began to weep afresh. "I'm—always—losing—things. I'm—so—absent-minded."

"Don't cry about it any more," counseled Jane impatiently. "I'll help you find it. Describe it to me and I'll write a notice and put it on the bulletin board. Did you go back and look for it?"

"Ye-s. I put a notice on the bulletin board downstairs and asked every girl I met if she'd heard of its being found. Nobody had. It was just a round, plain gold locket on a thin gold chain. It had my mother's picture in it and a curl of her hair. She had beautiful curly golden

hair." Judith groped about on the bed for her handkerchief and wiped her eyes.

Jane cast a startled glance at the dejected weeper. Judith had spoken in the past tense of her mother. Did she mean that—— "Is your mother dead?" she asked, her voice dropping on the last dread word.

Judith nodded again. She raised her blue, tear-wet eyes with a look so unutterably pathetic that it went straight to Jane's heart. Swayed by an excess of pity, born of their common loss, Jane sat down beside Judith and slid a sympathetic arm about her neck. "I know how dreadfully you feel," she said unsteadily. "I—my mother's dead, too." Jane stared at the opposite wall with blurred, unseeing eyes.

Judith reached out and slipped a timid hand into Jane's. The deep sorrow they had both known made them one in spirit.

For a little they sat in silence. It was Judith who broke it. "I've been trying to say something to you for a long time," she faltered. "It is——"

"I've something to say to you, too," interrupted Jane gently. "Please let me say it first." She had sprung to the conclusion that Judith intended to blame herself for certain things of which she was hardly guilty. Whatever apology was to be

made Jane decided must emanate from her lips. "I'm sorry I was so hateful that first day. You thought I didn't wish to room with you, and I was so angry with Mrs. Weatherbee I didn't care what you thought. I liked you when you first spoke to me. I was sorry afterward for all I said. Then when you didn't speak to me at the Inn, I was mortified and angrier than ever."

"But I met you on the campus before that and you didn't speak to me," reminded Judith. "That made me cross, too."

"I didn't see you. If I had, I would have bowed to you," Jane replied with convincing earnestness.

Judith's sad face brightened into a shy smile. "I'm afraid we misunderstood each other all around," she murmured. "I'd love to be your friend." Her fingers tightened on Jane's.

"And I yours." Jane returned the friendly pressure. "Tell me about—your mother."

Judith soberly complied with a brief description of her mother, long an invalid, who had passed away while she was in her freshman year at high school. The locket had been a birthday present; her mother's last gift to her in commemoration of the anniversary of her birth.

"No wonder you prized it," was Jane's sympa-

thetic comment. "We must try to find it." She said no more for a little. Then she began hesitatingly: "I'd like to tell you about my mother. I always called her Dearest. She was a student at Wellington when it was just a seminary. She wanted me to come here." Jane went on with a recital of those dark days at El Capitan that had followed upon her father's disclosure of his plan for her education.

"It's been very hard for you, hasn't it?" sighed Judith. A bright flush suddenly dyed her fair skin. "I told you I had something to say to you." She recounted her accidental reading of the torn half of Jane's discarded letter to her father. "I didn't realize what it was until after I read it," she apologized. "I tore it up and," her gravity merged into a soft chuckle, "I was so upset I almost tore up a page of my theme, too." She went on to relate how she had blundered into the French recitation.

True to the marvelous faculty youth has of rushing in a breath from tears to smiles, the sad heart-to-heart talk ended in a burst of laughter over Judith's unfortunate failing.

"I guess I must have been born absent-minded," she conceded ruefully. "I can never keep my mind on two things at once. I start out to do

something and then somebody comes along and I forgot all about it and rush into trouble. My blunders are generally funny ones, though. But losing my locket isn't." Her face fell.

"Perhaps you didn't wear it to-day," suggested Jane hopefully. "Maybe it's somewhere about the room. Suppose we hunt for it here."

"I'm afraid I wore it." Judith rose from the bed and going to her dressing table disconsolately poked its contents about. "No; it's not here."

Jane began a systematic prowl about the room, her sharp eyes scrutinizing every object that might harbor the missing locket. Judith ambled aimlessly along after her. "You won't find it there," she discouraged, as Jane opened the closet door and peered into the closet. On the inner side of the door were several hooks. One of them held Jane's walking hat. The opening of the door dislodged it, causing it to fall to the floor. Jane picked it up and was about to replace it. Then she gave a little amused laugh. Depending from a hook, which usually held Judith's blue velour hat, was a slender gold chain. From it dangled a gold locket. "Here's your lost locket," she announced jubilantly, "but how in the world did you happen to hang it there?"

Judith stared at her with the air of a sleep-

walker who has awakened in the midst of a midnight perambulation. "I might have known it," was her sheepish comment as she seized the locket and patted it lovingly. "Now I remember. I had it in my hand this morning. I was in a hurry. I opened the closet door and my hat fell down. I was so busy worrying for fear I'd be late for class that I picked up my hat, put it on my head, hung the locket on that hook and never knew it. I don't wear my hat half the time and I thought there was something different about me, but I couldn't tell what it was. I'm afraid I need a keeper." She giggled softly.

"I'm afraid you do." Jane echoed the giggle, thereby proving herself on an equality with the average girl. "I think I'd better apply for the high office. Hereafter I shall watch you like a hawk."

"I wish you would. I need to be reformed. I'm glad to have my locket, but I'm glad I lost it, too. If I hadn't——" Her eyes met Jane's in a gaze of dawning affection.

"We'd have gone on misunderstanding each other," finished Jane soberly. And although she could not find words to say so, she wondered dreamily if the mothers they mourned had conspired together in Heaven to roll away the clouds of misunderstanding.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE CLUTCH OF HATE

THE affair of the locket forged another link in the chain that was one day to bind Jane heart and soul to Wellington. Now that she and Judith had made peace, she discovered that a roommate was a blessing rather than a curse. With the lifting of the heavy constraint which had made them both so unhappy, Judith's sunny good-nature blossomed like a flower. She no longer felt afraid of Jane. The latter's many moods did not now dismay her. Hers was a nature that preferred to follow rather than to lead. When Jane was silent to moroseness, Judith went quietly about her own affairs, pretending not to notice. But during Jane's lighter moods, she met her roommate with whole-souled cheerfulness.

"What shall you wear to the freshman dance, Jane?" asked Judith one rainy afternoon. Jane

had come in from her last class to find Judith in the midst of a wholesale overhauling of her trunk. Three evening frocks were conspicuously laid out on her bed, while Judith stood in rapt contemplation of them, trying to decide which of them should adorn her tall, slender person.

"I'm not going." Jane's face clouded as she made this succinct answer.

"Not going?" Judith shifted her gaze from the gowns to Jane. "But you must. No good freshman ever stays away from *that* dance. It's our duty to be present."

"It's not mine." Jane's jaw set stubbornly. Not even to Judith would she admit that her chief reason for staying away from the much-discussed dance was due to the lack of proper escort. From Dorothy Martin she had learned that it was the custom of the upper class students to extend personal invitations to their freshman sisters. Judith had already been invited by a sophomore who lived at Argyle Hall. No one had taken the trouble to invite *her,* therefore Jane scorned to be one of those who, minus an escort, were forced to attend the festivity singly or in company with other freshmen who had not been fortunate enough to receive personal invitations from their big sisters.

"But think of the good time you'll miss," argued Judith. "And you have so many pretty frocks, too. You'd look perfectly stunning in that dull gold chiffon frock. Don't you like dancing?"

"I don't care so very much about it." Jane shrugged her shoulders with a brave show of indifference. She did care a great deal, however. Privately she had half hoped that Dorothy might invite her. She had scornfully dismissed the thought when she remembered the junior's high standing at Wellington. Dorothy knew many girls whom she probably liked far better than Jane. If Dorothy had purposed inviting her she would have done so before now. It lacked but four days of the Saturday evening set for the affair. But Dorothy had not even spoken of it to her, and she knew no other upper class student well enough to count on an invitation.

"Perhaps you'll change your mind before Saturday evening," Judith insisted. As she said this an inkling of the true state of affairs dawned upon her. "She hasn't been specially invited," was her guess. Regretting her persistency, Judith said hastily, "I don't know which of these to wear." She waved a hand toward the spread-out finery.

"Why don't you wear the white one?" Jane made resolute effort to banish her own disappointment and interest herself in Judith's problem. "That frilly lace dress is exactly suited to you."

"I believe I will." Judith picked up the soft lace frock and smoothed one of its many ruffles. "I've a perfectly sweet blue ribbon sash to go with it."

"Haven't you a white one? I think I'd like a white sash better than a blue."

"No; I've only a white ribbon belt and I don't care much for it."

"Wait a minute." Jane crossed to the chiffonier. Opening a drawer, she fumbled in it for a moment. "How do you like this?" She held up a wonderful sash of sheer white silk. It was embroidered here and there with tiny white daisies. The ends bore a deeply embroidered design of the same flower and were finished with heavy white silk fringe.

"Oh!" Judith gasped in admiration as Jane tossed it into her outstretched hands. "Isn't it exquisite? I never saw anything quite like it."

"Dad bought it in Mexico. It was embroidered by a nun in the San Sebastian convent. I've

never worn it. You may keep it, if you will. It really belongs with that dress."

"I couldn't accept it. It's far too beautiful for you to give away," protested Judith. "I don't believe I ought even to wear it to the dance. Something might happen to it."

"You are to keep it." Jane's tones held finality. "I wish you to have it. Dad can get me another just as pretty when he goes across the border again. His business takes him to Mexico several times a year."

"Jane Allen, you are too sweet for anything!" Judith laid the sash on top of the white gown and proceeded to hug her roommate with grateful fervor. "I won't refuse it, because I know you would truly like me to keep it."

"There goes my hair." Jane laughed and disengaged herself from Judith's devastating arms. A faint flush of embarrassment tinged her cheeks. She was not used to caresses. Still, it was pleasant to know that one was appreciated.

But Judith yearned to show further appreciation, as she stood gloating over her newly acquired riches. The delighted freshman had quietly made up her mind that she would make it her business to see that some one invited Jane to the hop. She would put the matter before

Dorothy Martin. Dorothy would help her to bring about the desired result. Judith, too, though it strange that the junior had not offered herself to Jane as an escort. Jane had been untiring in her zeal to teach Dorothy to ride, and the two spent considerable time together.

Judith's good offices were not required, however, for when Jane came upstairs after dinner that evening her radiant face was the forerunner of pleasant news. She tried to keep the excitement out of her voice as she said casually, "Dorothy Martin has invited me to the freshman hop." But a happy little thrill in her tones told its own story.

"I'm ever so glad." Judith made hearty response. "Of course, you'll go now."

"Yes; I believe I ought to accept. In fact I've already accepted." Jane looked unutterably happy. "I'll wear the gold-colored gown you said you liked. I've a pretty gold necklace with flat carved links to wear with it, and a sweet pair of slippers to match the gown."

"We'll be freshmen belles," prophesied Judith gaily when Jane had exhibited the necklace for her edification. "With that necklace and my sash as fine touches of ornamentation, behold the observed of all observers.

"Let's have a grand trying-on of finery," she proposed. "I'm crazy to see you in that golden dress. Besides, I'd like to try the effect of my embroidered sash. It won't take long if we hurry, and we can study for all we're worth to make up for lost time. I'll put a busy sign on the door, so we won't be disturbed."

"All right," agreed Jane with ready eagerness. She could not repress a wry smile at Judith's precaution, however. Someone was always coming to the door in quest of her genial roommate. Aside from Adrienne Dupree and Dorothy, no one ever came to see *her.*

The two girls spent a happy session dressing up. Judith looked girlishly pretty in her fluffy white frock, and Jane exclaimed warmly over the dainty picture she made. She was a trifle startled, however, when Judith cried out admiringly, "Jane Allen, you are positively *beautiful!* You look exactly like a princess." Taking Jane by the arm she led her to her dressing-table. "Deign to gaze upon yourself, your Highness," she laughingly ordered, making a low bow.

"You're a dear old goose, Judy." Nevertheless Jane's color heightened at the story the mirror told. The long, graceful lines of the golden frock, which brought out the red lights in her

bronze hair, gave her a stately appearance, such as princesses are fabled to possess. The square-cut neck showed the white column of her beautiful throat and a little of her sloping shoulders. The short sleeves fell away from her softly rounded arms, the contour of which was particularly lovely. Jane did indeed present the appearance of royalty. Face to face with herself, she could not deny her own beauty.

"It will do very well," she said shortly, turning away from the mirror. Vanity was not one of her failings. She did not propose to yield to it even briefly. Yet as she put away the party dress, preparatory to studying her lessons, she could not help hoping somewhat wistfully that Dorothy would be pleased with her freshman.

For an hour after the two had settled themselves to their work, silence reigned supreme.

"Oh, bother!" Judith was turning over the books on the table, an expression of annoyance on her placid face. "I've left my notebook on the living-room table. I stopped there to talk to Mary Ashton this afternoon and you can guess the rest. I'll have to dress and go downstairs for it. I don't dare go as I am. If Mrs. Weatherbee saw me parading about down there in my kimono she'd never survive the shock."

"Let me go for you," offered Jane. After the try-on she had resumed the one-piece gown of blue serge that she had worn all day.

"I'm sorry to trouble you, but if you would I'd be eternally grateful." Judith looked relief. "You can't miss it. My name's written on the cover. It's on the library table."

Jane was already at the door as Judith spoke. Running lightly down the stairs, she approached the doorway of the living room. Her feet were on the threshold when the sound of Edith Hammond's high-pitched tones caused her to halt. Ordinarily she would have walked in unmindful of the latter's presence. Unfortunately she heard that which rooted her to the spot. From between the portières the room appeared to be deserted of occupants. She could not see Edith, for she was occupying an oak settle at the right of the door, but she could hear distinctly. "I think it's a burning shame, Dot, that you are going to saddle yourself with that horrid Allen girl," Edith was complaining pettishly. "She will completely spoil your evening. She's thoroughly disliked here at the Hall. You'll find yourself with an elephant on your hands Saturday night."

"You don't understand, Edith," replied Dorothy's patient voice. "She has been very sweet to

me and it's only fair that I should try to make some return. I'm sorry for Jane, Edith. It's really too bad——"

But Jane did not wait to hear more. She faced about and fled upstairs as though pursued by demons. Dashing into her room, she flung herself down in the chair she had lately occupied, her face dark with fury.

"Did you get it?" Judith did not raise her eyes from her book. She was quite accustomed to Jane's abrupt fashion of entrance. Receiving no answer to her question, she looked up. "What's the matter?" Jane's storm-ridden features filled her with sudden dread. Something disagreeable had happened. That was evident.

Still Jane made no response. She sat with her chin in her hands as though turned to stone. "I *hate* Edith Hammond!" she muttered between set teeth. "I *hate* her. Do you hear me?"

"I'm not deaf," Judith reminded smilingly with a view to scattering the storm that seemed about to break. "Don't pay any attention to her. She isn't a strictly genial person. I'm not extravagantly fond of her, either. What's her latest crime, Janie?"

"I *hate* Dorothy Martin, too," Jane continued to glower savagely. "I'll show her that I don't

need her pity. I despise deceit. I never would have believed that she could be so hateful."

Real concern now leaped into Judith's eyes. "You can't mean that of Dorothy," she said incredulously.

Jane raised her head with a jerk and glared angrily at Judith. "Don't try to defend her. If you do I shall hate you, too. And don't say another word to me about the dance. That's all."

"But——" protested Judith.

"I *said,* 'That's all.' " Jane snatched her books from the table, slammed them down on it in an uneven pile and stalked to the window.

Judith sighed softly and dropped her eyes to her book. It was useless to continue her inquiry. She wished that she had not allowed Jane to go for her notebook. As it was she had not brought it with her. Instead she had returned in a tempest of ill-humor. Whatever had occurred in that brief space of time, Dorothy Martin and Edith Hammond were concerned in it. Now Jane would not go to the hop. It was too provoking. She tried to fix her mind on her lessons, but Jane's furious face stared at her from the printed pages.

"I'm going to bed," she announced finally, timidly addressing the immovable figure at the

window. "You'd better come, too. It's almost half-past."

"I'll go to bed when I get ready," came the rude answer. "Please let me alone."

Having announced her intention, Judith dawled through her preparations for sleep, now and then stealing a pitying glance at Jane. She was not angry at Jane's rudeness. She understood dimly that her roommate was wrestling in the grip of some dark misfortune which she preferred not to reveal. When at last she laid her wondering brown head on her pillow, Jane still stood at the window, staring fixedly out at the night.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OUTLANDER

AT breakfast the next morning Jane coldly informed Dorothy Martin that she could not accept her invitation to the coming dance. She felt wickedly satisfied at the result. Dorothy's tranquil face was visited with a quick flush that Jane construed as guilt. "Why not?" she demanded in a tone of astonishment that Jane chose to consider counterfeit.

"Because I don't wish to go," returned Jane with brusque brevity.

Edith Hammond smiled maliciously, while Adrienne Dupree's childlike eyes grew very round. "That is the best answer in the world, if you mean it." Dorothy tried to cover her annoyance with an attempt at being pleasant.

"I mean it." Jane devoted her attention to her grape fruit, her brows drawn in the old

frown that had not been in evidence of late.

"Why won't you go, Jane?" burst forth Adrienne. "I shall be most disappointed if you're not there on the great night."

Jane merely glanced at her, and dug her spoon savagely into her grape fruit.

An angry sparkle showed itself in the little French girl's eyes. Although she was fond of Jane, she did not enjoy being thus ignored.

"Very likely Miss Allen has reasons of her own for not going which she prefers to keep to herself," suggested Edith with mocking sweetness.

"You, at least, are not likely to hear them," was Jane's sharp rejoinder.

"I should not be interested in hearing them," snapped Edith.

"No; I don't think *you* would be." Jane's retort caused Edith to stir guiltily. She wondered uneasily what the emphasis on the "you" meant. There was more behind it than appeared on the surface.

"As your big sister, girls, I can't allow you to quarrel like this." Dorothy's tone was very grave. "I am sorry, Jane, that you won't accept me as an escort. That is all that need be said, I think."

Breakfast proved a dismal repast. Jane's glowering face put a damper on conversation. Adrienne was slightly ruffled at being ignored by her friend. Dorothy was too greatly hurt to talk much. Edith was also sulky at being reproved by Dorothy.

Jane left the table first, silent and morose.

"I wonder what ails her Highness," sneered Edith. "It is evident that——"

"We will not discuss Jane, if you please." Dorothy's lips were firmly compressed.

"Oh, very well." Edith tossed her head. She rose almost immediately and strolled out of the dining room.

"I'm going to interview naughty Jane," announced Adrienne. "It is I who will find out what has given her the unhappiness."

But Adrienne reckoned without her host. Pursuing Jane to her room, she besieged her with a rapid fire of questions, to all of which she received no reply except, "I have nothing to say. I'm not angry with you. I'm not going to the dance and that settles it."

"Then it is for nothing that I have come to offer the sympathy!" cried Adrienne at last in exasperation. She left the room distinctly out of sorts with Jane, resolving that she would let

her severely alone until her ill-humor had vanished.

During the remaining days preceding the festivity, Jane behaved in the formidable fashion of her first week at Wellington. At table she shrouded herself in a garment of indifference that was most trying to Dorothy. She had not the remotest idea of Jane's mysterious grievance. She had knocked at Jane's door on the evening of the day she had been rebuffed. Judith had admitted her joyfully, but Jane had ignored her very presence. A swift rush of hurt pride hurried her out without having said that which she had come to say. Quietly accepting her defeat, she did not again attempt to make peace.

Good-natured Judith found Jane hard to live with during those four gloomy days that preceded the dance. Her roommate was suffering from a return of her former moroseness. When Judith strove to make conversation, Jane simply stared or answered in monosyllables. During study hours, she developed an annoying habit of suddenly shoving aside her books, to spring from her chair and pace the room with a long, gliding movement that reminded poor Judith of a caged lion in a Zoological garden. Weary at last, she

would fling herself in a chair to mope disconsolately.

On the evening of the hop she went to Rutherford Inn for dinner, there to brood in solitary grandeur. It was her intention to remain away from the Hall until its residents had set off for the gymnasium where the affair was to take place. She had learned from Judith that the receiving party was to be in line at half-past seven, for President Blakesly had set eleven o'clock as the time limit for the dancing, and the participants were anxious to make the most of their revel.

It was twenty minutes to eight when Jane wended her gloomy way to Madison Hall. As she entered, she encountered Mrs. Weatherbee, who was emerging from the living room. "Something came by express for you to-day, Miss Allen. It is in my office. You will find it just inside at the left of my desk." Mrs. Weatherbee spoke coldly. From Edith Hammond she had heard of Jane's latest freak of temper, and she felt completely out of sympathy with her.

"Thank you." Jane stalked through the hall to the office to garner what was rightfully hers. A ray of light pierced her darkened vision as she viewed a square but narrow crate that stood upright against the wall. So, it had come at last,

and in her hour of need. Despite its weight, Jane raised it in her strong young arms and bore it up the stairs to her room.

Setting it down, she tore at the thin tough slats that encased it so sturdily. She succeeded in tearing one of them loose, but the others resisted the strength of her importuning fingers. "I'll have to go downstairs for a hammer," she muttered, and set off in her usual whirlwind fashion for the kitchen.

Jane had never before entered the kitchen of the Hall. She had not the slightest idea as to where else she might find a hammer. No doubt one of the servants could furnish her with that useful article. As she swung open the kitchen door she just missed coming into violent collision with a girl who was seeking exit from the room. The girl's eyes were suspiciously red. She averted her face, and, with a murmured, "Excuse me," was about to pass on.

"Norma!" Jane's voice rang out with real concern. "What is the matter?" She halted directly in front of the girl, barring her passage.

"Nothing." Nevertheless Norma appeared on the verge of bursting into tears. She brushed Jane gently aside and started down the hall almost at a run.

Jane's first impulse was to follow her. Remembering that, in her darker moods, she herself resented questioning, she walked slowly into the kitchen where the servants were busying themselves with the washing of the dinner dishes. Her polite request for a hammer met with instant response. Speeding to her room, Jane lost no time in demolishing the stubborn crate. She gave a cluck of satisfaction as she snatched a heavy, paper-wrapped, square object from its excelsior packing. Tearing away the paper, her sober features broke into tender radiance. "Dearest!" she whispered, drawing a quick sobbing breath. Then she laid her lips to the gentle face that looked lovingly out at her from the painted canvas.

Depositing her mother's portrait on her bed, Jane stood before it, her eyes reverently drinking in the changeless beauty of the loved features. Long she worshipped there. As the moments went by the rancor of the preceding days vanished, leaving her overwhelmingly sad and heartsick. She had promised her mother so much, only to break her word. If only she had been more patient, less ready to flame into futile rage over what now struck her as being merely trivial. Would she never succeed in conquering that hate-

ful side of her nature which seemed always bound to overshadow her finer impulses? She longed for an opportunity to make swift restitution for her faults. But what was there to do?

Suddenly Jane remembered the sad, tear-stained face Norma Bennett had turned to her as she slipped past her into the hall. Jane recalled heavily her resolution to help Norma fight her battles. Like the others she had made, it had amounted to nothing. But it was not yet too late. Like herself, Norma had so few friends, perhaps she would not resent sympathy if it were sincerely offered.

Jane tore her eyes from her mother's portrait and walked hesitatingly to the door. Norma roomed on the top floor in a narrow cubby-hole situated at the back of the house. Jane had obtained this information from Norma herself, during one of their conversations. Although Jane had invited Norma to drop in on her, the girl had never taken advantage of the kindly invitation. Neither had she ever invited Jane to call on her.

Climbing the stairs to the fourth floor, Jane paused before the closed door of the room she guessed to be Norma's and knocked rather diffidently. Receiving no answer, she repeated the

knock, this time in resolute fashion. She heard a stir of footsteps within, then the door opened. The eyes that regarded Jane were considerably redder than before. Norma had evidently been indulging in a solitary burst of weeping. "Oh!" she exclaimed in confusion. "Why, Miss Allen!"

"I came," began Jane. She had no idea as to what she had best say next. Inspiration seizing her, she repeated, "I came—to see if you would not like to see my mother's portrait. I have just finished unpacking it."

An expression of mingled surprise and hesitation swept Norma's face. "I——" She hesitated, as though about to refuse.

"Please come," urged Jane. "I am anxious that you, in particular, should see it."

"All right, I will—and thank you."

Jane had already wheeled to go downstairs. Norma followed her, wondering a little what had prompted this sudden whim on the part of this peculiar, though always to her, kindly girl.

Three minutes later the two stood side by side before the portrait that was the inspiration of all Jane's better impulses. Norma was strangely stirred by the gentle loveliness of the pictured woman. "How beautiful!" she said softly. "I

never knew *my* mother. She died when I was three weeks old."

"I was twelve when Dearest died," returned Jane, her gaze fastened on the portrait.

"I didn't know—I thought——" stammered Norma. "How you must miss her."

"I do." Jane's answer came with a sharpness born of the lonely years. Squaring her shoulders as though about to perform a difficult task, she began abruptly: "It's none of my business, but I wish you'd tell me why you've been crying?"

Norma's lip quivered. "I'm a silly to cry," she answered rather unsteadily, "but—well, I was dreadfully disappointed because I couldn't go to the dance to-night. I know I ought not to mind. I'm here for business, not pleasure. Still, I can't help feeling bad sometimes at being so completely out of things. I went to it last year. Dorothy Martin invited me. This year it was my right to do the inviting, but I couldn't."

"Why not?" demanded Jane.

Norma colored painfully. She wished Jane had not asked this searching question. She stared fixedly at the portrait. Was it her imagination, or did the clear gray eyes seem to smile, encouraging her to make frank reply? Raising her head a trifle proudly, she said: "In the first

place I haven't an evening dress. Then, too, I am too poor to buy flowers for my freshman. All the upper class girls do, you know. I couldn't invite anyone only to make her feel ashamed of me. I don't believe any girl would have accepted, if I had. I'm just a nobody at Wellington."

Jane frowned ferociously as she listened. Her drawn brows were not an evidence of displeasure at Norma. She was thinking how greatly she despised the absurd social system which puts fine clothes and wealth ahead of all else. "It's the heart that counts, Janie." She could almost hear her father's hearty voice. Suddenly her frown gave place to a broad smile. Into her mind flashed the old tale of poor, neglected Cinderella. But Cinderella had found a fairy godmother. Very well. Norma should have a fairy godmother, too, for she, Jane Allen, would play the part.

CHAPTER XV

PLAYING FAIRY GODMOTHER

MEASURING Norma's tall, but slightly drooping figure, in a keen glance, Jane burst forth with nervous energy. "Norma Bennett, you and I are going to that dance together. It's not quite half-past eight. There won't be time to get any flowers, but we don't need them. I'm going to be your fairy godmother. I've lots of pretty dresses. You are about my height and build. I am sure you can wear one of them."

"Oh, I couldn't!" gasped Norma. Nevertheless the proposal brought a gleam of sunshine to her dejected features.

Jane appeared not to hear her. She was on the other side of the room before the larger of her two trunks. Flinging back the lid she lifted the shallow tray and deposited it on the floor. A

bewildering succession of feminine finery followed it. "Here you are." She sprang to her feet, holding up a gown of shimmering pale blue and white. The lower foundation of blue silk was laid in tiny pleats. It had an over-drapery of white chiffon, caught up with graceful sprays of blue velvet forget-me-nots. The short white chiffon sleeves were drawn back into artistic folds and ornamented with the same flower. The round neck ended in a bertha of pleated chiffon that fell almost to the short waist.

"This will fit you," she nodded. "It's a trifle tight for me. I've never worn it. Aunt Mary was determined I should have it. Blue's not my color. I'm sure it was made on purpose for you. Try it on. If it fits, I wish you to take it as a present from——" her eyes sought the portrait, "from Dearest. You can't refuse her gift, now can you?"

Jane felt that this was the most clinching argument she could advance. Norma couldn't possibly refuse the frock now.

Norma eyed the frock in distressed silence. She wanted it, oh, how she wanted it. Never in her short life had she dreamed of possessing such a wonderful gown. Yet pride sealed her lips. She wished Jane had not brought her mother into

the problem. It made refusal so very hard. "I'd love to accept it," was her honest reply, "but I don't believe I ought."

"Here, take it. It's yours." Jane boldly proffered the blue and white wonder. "I'm a determined person who won't take 'no' for an answer. Wait a minute. I'll dig up the slippers that go with it." Jane dived into her trunk and rummaged with a will. "Here they are." She held up a pair of narrow pale-blue satin slippers. "I hope they will fit. What size shoe do you wear?"

"Four B." Things were happening so rapidly that Norma saw the slippers through a mist of happy tears.

"These are five A. You can wear them." Jane rose and, going to the chiffonier, returned almost instantly with a pair of blue silk stockings and a pair of long white gloves. "Oh, yes. I almost forgot." Her last invasion of her trunk was productive of a petticoat of sheer white silk. "Now, Cinderella, prepare for the ball," she laughed. "You don't mind my calling you Cinderella, do you? She had a fairy godmother, you know. Now we must hurry, or the party will be over before we arrive in all our glory."

Jane set about her preparations for the hop as though the matter were definitely settled. Norma

watched her shyly for a little, then she began slowly to unfasten her plain white blouse. The temptation to be a real butterfly among butterflies was too great to be resisted.

"How pretty you are!" was Jane's generous praise, as twenty minutes afterward she viewed the formerly meek Norma, whom the magic wand of kindness had transformed into a radiant vision in blue and white.

"You are simply stunning," was Norma's admiring cry.

Jane did indeed deserve the tribute. Forgetfulness of self had brought her undeniable beauty to the front with a bound. She was a study in gold, and her gray eyes glowed like lamps under her dark brows, now unmarred with the ugly frown which so frequently visited them.

"Here's a cape." Jane handed Norma a white broadcloth wrap lined with white brocade. "You are to keep that, too. It will come handy all year." As she spoke she slipped her arms into a fur-trimmed evening coat of old gold plush. "Now we are ready. We can walk to the gymnasium. It's not far and a beautiful night."

There was a great craning of necks and more than one murmur of admiration as two resplendent figures entered the gymnasium, which was

disguised by many palms, draperies, cushions, divans and whatever decorative loot the sophomores could lay hold on, into the semblance of a ballroom. The receiving party had forsaken their duties at half-past eight to mingle with their guests. As it was nine o'clock when Jane and Norma made their triumphal entry, they were denied the privilege of that august body's polite welcome. A one-step had just ended and the dancers were scattered about the room in little groups, or walking about the polished floor in couples. Here and there a solitary girl rested on a divan or chair, with which the sides of the gymnasium were lined, but the majority of the guests preferred the entertainment of numbers.

Now that she was actually a part of that laughing, chatting company, Jane felt her courage oozing to the very toes of her gold-colored slippers. Suppose no one came near them or asked them to dance In her anxiety to give Norma pleasure she had quite forgotten her own unpopularity. Now the unhappy knowledge returned full force and with it the remembrance of Norma's humble status in college. Tossing her head with a sudden access of bravado, Jane determined that Norma should have a good time if there were

any possible means by which she might bring it to pass.

As she stood deliberating on what should be her first move, a cheery voice called out: "Jane Allen, you old fraud! I was never more surprised in all my life." Judith Stearns had come up behind her and slipped a welcoming arm about her waist.

"Norma and I decided at the last minute to come. She's my escort." Jane flushed prettily as she made this statement.

"You are two gorgeous creatures, and you positively dazzle me," laughed Judith. "Have you your dance cards? I intend to have the honor of several dances with each of you. Wait a minute until I bring Ethel." Judith glided away to return with Ethel Lacey, a small, rather stout girl with a good-natured, broadly smiling face. In their brief walk across the ballroom, Judith had instructed Ethel regarding her duty and the latter now expressed herself as anxious to dance with Norma and Jane.

They had hardly finished scribbling their names on the dance cards of these latest arrivals when Adrienne fluttered up, looking for all the world like a frolicsome young imp in her smart gown of flame-colored silk crêpe. Adrienne had

spied Jane from afar and hastened to welcome her. To her beauty-worshipping soul, Jane's resplendent dawning upon the dance more than made up for her previous shortcomings.

"Is it that you are really here, *ma belle?*" she gurgled, slipping a small hand into Jane's. "And you are glorious! *Je vous salut.*" She made a low bow. "We will dance together. Is it not so? We shall be admired of many." In her joyful excitement she had lapsed into the quaint phraseology of her parents. "Oh, it is of a happiness *parfaitement!*" She clasped her mites of hands and revolved about the embarrassed Jane in a kind of slow dance. "And *la petite* Norma! She is also quite wonderful."

The announcing strains of a waltz checked her rippling flow of admiration. "I must go," she pouted regretfully. "A very grand senior is to be my partner for this. Afterward I shall look for you."

The "very grand senior" walked up at that moment to claim the scarlet sprite, and she floated away on her partner's arm, her tiny feet seeming scarcely to touch the floor, her black head bobbing an impish farewell over her shoulder.

Jane waited only long enough to see Norma

dance off with Ethel, then with Judith as a partner she swung into the waltz.

"How in the world did it all happen?" was Judith's first speech.

"Don't ask me here to-night. When we get home I'll tell you. But, Judy, I wish you'd promise me that you'll help Norma to have a good time. It doesn't matter about me. I'm not so much in love with all this."

"Of course I will," promised Judith. She was wondering mightily at Jane's astonishing change of view. It was the very last thing she had expected of the girl she had so lately seen pacing the room like an untamed animal beating against the bars of captivity.

As the evening wore away, Jane discovered that Judith had more than kept her word. She took Norma under her special eye and rallied the girls to the retiring sophomore's standard, until that timid young person felt herself almost a guest of honor rather than a humble toiler whose duty it was to serve rather than to be served. Jane herself was not left to languish. Although she was not in favor at Madison Hall, in that large assemblage of students she came into contact with more than one girl who seemed disposed to be friendly.

Once during the evening her good humor came very near to deserting her. As she strolled about the room, during an intermission, with Adrienne Dupree, a curious feeling that she was the subject of discussion drew her wandering glance to a group of girls gathered about the lemonade bowl. Her eyes encountered another pair, pale blue and glittering with cold animosity. They belonged to Marian Seaton. Her thin lips curled scornfully and she turned to whisper to Maizie Gilbert, who stood at her side, looming like a young mountain in her much-shirred pink silk gown. Maizie was considerably too stout to wear pink, but she was complacently unaware of that truth. Marian's whisper brought an insolent laugh from Maizie that made Jane's cheeks burn. She experienced a wild desire to fly at them both and tear them to bits. Instead she looked away as though she had not noticed either of them. She would not spoil this gala night by allowing her dislike of Marian to trouble her.

There was one bitter drop in her cup of pleasure, however. Dorothy Martin had appeared not to see her. She could hardly blame Dorothy for this. She was remorsefully conscious that she had treated the kindly junior with discourtesy. Still, Jane could not forget what she had over-

heard in the living room. If only Dorothy had not spoken so patronizingly of her to Edith Hammond. She had actually apologized to Edith for inviting Jane to the hop. Poor Jane was extremely fond of Dorothy, or rather she admitted to herself that she "had been." It was now a thing of the past. She could never again care for this deceitful girl. Yet in her heart she was half tempted to go to Dorothy and have matters out. Her indomitable pride alone held her aloof.

Dorothy, on her part, was righteously indignant with Jane. She felt that she had been very badly treated. She was too fair-minded not to recognize that in bringing Norma Bennett to the dance Jane had, somehow, performed a miracle. She herself had urged Norma to take part in the affair, and Norma had obstinately refused to consider it. She had tearfully confided her reasons to Dorothy, who had generously offered her one of her gowns. Norma had remained adamant. It had been left to Jane to work the wonder. Dorothy was divided between admiration of Jane's method of bringing about miracles and disapproval of her bald discourtesy.

And so, while the freshmen danced their merry way to acquaintance with their elder sisters, two

young girls, so lately devoted friends, but now firmly entrenched in their own particular grievance, held rigidly aloof, misunderstanding and misunderstood.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LURE OF BASKET-BALL

"AT last! Just read this, Jane." Judith Stearns' tranquil face wore a delighted smile. The triumphant ring in her voice indicated that her cursory glance at the bulletin board had furnished her with a piece of valuable information.

"What is it?" Jane turned half impatiently and walked back to where Judith stood in rapt perusal of a notice, typed in capitals, and flaunting itself conspicuously at the top of the board.

What the daily press is to a news-hungry public, the bulletin board becomes to the college girl. By means of its kindly legion of notices she is able to keep in direct touch with the doings of her limited world. Many and varied are the bits of information gleaned from its daily array of notices of which she would otherwise remain ignorant.

To Judith the faithful perusal of this treasure trove, situated just inside the entrance to Wellington Hall, had become a fixed habit. Quite to the contrary, Jane seldom deigned to glance at it. Whatever it held of interest she was sure to learn from Judith's obliging lips. Still partially indifferent to what went on about her, Jane regarded it as a tiresome succession of college club and society notices, with an occasional "Lost" or "Found" thrown in by way of relieving its monotony. Now, as her eyes followed Judith's indicating finger, she was not thrilled to read that a try-out for basket-ball, to be held with a view to the making of the freshman team, was scheduled to take place in the gymnasium at half-past four o'clock on Friday afternoon.

"I've been waiting for this," rejoiced Judith. "Dorothy Martin said that the team is usually made soon after the freshman class election. This year there was an argument among the sophomores about basket-ball. They happen to be the smallest class for a number of years, and most of them weren't in favor of the good old game."

"What difference need that make to the freshmen?" asked Jane indifferently. "Can't they play without the sophomores?" Jane had not the slightest knowledge of basket-ball, nor did

she yearn to become familiar with its intricacies.

"Of course they can," nodded Judith, "but it wouldn't be much fun. If the sophomores had decided to drop basket-ball this year—thank fortune they didn't—the freshmen could have made up two teams among themselves, and one team could have played against the other. That's all very well in practice games, but there's no special glory in it. A picked team needs real opposition. That's the reason they challenge the sophomores. If they can beat them, it's a decided feather in the freshman cap."

"Can't the freshmen challenge the juniors or seniors?" Jane had now become mildly interested. Hitherto, basket-ball had occupied small place in her thoughts. The idea of contest appealed to her, however.

"They have never done so at Wellington, so I've been told," returned Judith. "When one reaches junior estate a great many other things crowd basket-ball out. Whenever there has been a junior team, the members of it have never condescended to go below the sophomores. As I'm a rabid basket-ball enthusiast, I've taken pains to gather all this information. The seniors hardly ever play, although they are useful as referees, time-keepers, etc. It really rests with

the freshmen and sophomores to keep basket-ball alive. While Miss Winslow was dean, she didn't encourage the noble sport, but Miss Rutledge is quite different. She's from California, you know, and believes that girls ought to be interested in college sports. You must go to the try-out with me, then you'll understand why I like to play basket-ball. I hope I'll make the team. I shall try my hardest."

"I don't believe I care to go. If it is anything like the class election was, deliver me from it." Jane frowned at the memory of the recent freshman election of officers. It had taken place directly after the dance and had been a far from peaceful affair. A number of freshmen had energetically electioneered for Marian Seaton for class president. She had lost the office by a large majority in favor of Barbara Temple, a most popular freshman at Argyle Hall, and the defeated electioneers had accepted their defeat with anything but good grace. There had also been considerable petty wrangling over the other offices. Afterward Jane had returned to Madison Hall distinctly disgusted with the whole affair. It had been a matter of satisfaction to her, however, to know that the disagreeable Marian

Seaton had not gained the high office she had so greatly coveted.

"Oh, it won't be like *that*," Judith hastened to assure her. "The team is to be picked. Those who are anxious to play are to be tried out on the floor. It's quite exciting. Please promise you'll go. If you aren't interested, then you needn't go to the practice games."

"All right, I'll go, Judy," promised Jane. "If I don't find it interesting, I won't even stay to see it through."

"You'll stay. See if you don't," predicted Judith. "I hope Dorothy Martin will be one of the deciding committee. One can depend on fair treatment from her."

"Aren't the judges fair?" Jane smiled rather cynically. She was not surprised at Judith's remark. The majority of the girls she had encountered at Wellington had proved themselves anything but fair in their treatment of their fellow students. Privately she included Dorothy among them. Dorothy had been most unfair to her, at least.

"It's not quite loyal to say they aren't," Judith amended. "Yet sometimes they show favoritism. Not here, perhaps. When I was at Morrison, the prep. school I attended before I came here,

there was a great deal of that sort of thing. I nearly missed a chance to play in a big game because the physical culture instructor didn't like me. She found fault with my passing, and tried to put another girl, a pet of hers, in my place. The rest of the team made such a fuss, she finally let the matter drop. But if the team hadn't backed me, you can see where Judy would have landed."

"How could she be so despicable!" exclaimed Jane. "That's the chief reason I've never cared much for girls. Most of them are disloyal."

"Oh, no, they aren't. It's just the other way. Ninety per cent of them are true blue. It's the other ten per cent that make loyal ones appear under false colors. I'm very fond of most of the girls I know. Some day you will feel the same about the girls here."

"I doubt it." Jane shrugged her shoulders with the air of a misanthrope.

During the week, however, she heard so much of basket-ball that she began to wonder if, after all, it might not prove worthy of passing attention. The subject appeared to be on everyone's tongue. She heard snatches of it during recitation hours and still more of it at Madison Hall. Although the Hall was not strictly a freshman

house, owing to the large number of vacancies due to the graduation of last year's seniors, these vacancies had been quickly filled by entering freshmen. Of the thirty-six girls who dwelt in it, not more than ten of that number were upper class.

Even vivacious little Adrienne Dupree had caught basket-ball fever. Delighting in anything that promised activity, she had calmly announced her intention of taking part in the try-out. At table she daily besieged Dorothy Martin with eager questions concerning the rules of basket-ball. She enveigled Judith Stearns and good-natured Ethel Lacey into going with her to the gymnasium, there to furnish a course of instruction in the various mysteries of the game. She soon mastered the main points and delighted her willing teachers with her lithe, cat-like movements and fleetness of foot. "But indeed I am not so slow," she would complacently remark, after performing some particularly agile feat. "Perhaps it is I who will be chosen to play on the great team."

While at meals, Adrienne entertained Dorothy with a voluble flow of chatter concerning her ambitions, but to Jane, the three short periods of time she spent daily at table were absolutely

painful. She had not minded being on the outs with Edith Hammond. With Dorothy and Adrienne as staunch supporters, Edith's barbed shafts were seldom returned. Jane could afford to overlook them. Since Dorothy had turned against her, as Jane obstinately chose to believe was the case, she felt extremely ill at ease when in her presence. To be sure, she and Jane exchanged civilities, but that was all. There were no more pleasant talks; no more riding lessons; no more friendly hailings when they chanced to meet outside the Hall.

Adrienne and Edith were alike curious regarding Jane's grievance against Dorothy. The former longed to question both interested parties, but being an extremely wise child, she held her tongue. Jane had rebuffed her for presuming to inquire into her reasons for not attending the freshman dance. As she was really fond of this strange girl, she did not yearn to introduce a subject that might result in sharp words between them. As for Dorothy, Adrienne felt that she would as soon inquire into the personal affairs of Miss Rutledge as to cross-question this stately junior.

Edith entertained no such awe of Dorothy. Aware that something had gone wrong, she had

button-holed Dorothy for a confidential talk at the first opportunity that presented itself, following Jane's refusal of the junior's invitation. To her first sneering speech, "It is evident that your dear Miss Allen doesn't appreciate your kindness, Dot," Dorothy had endeavored to silence her with, "I do not wish to discuss Jane with you, Edith." But Edith had persisted until in sheer vexation Dorothy had cried out: "I haven't the slightest idea why Jane refused my invitation. If I had, I would not tell you. Will you please be kind enough to drop the subject?"

From Norma Bennett, Dorothy had ascertained the details of the generous part Jane had played on the evening of the hop. Knowing Norma to be the soul of discretion, she had ventured to tell her of Jane's refusal, in the hope that Norma might be able to throw light on that which was still a mystery to her. Norma could offer no solution. During that happy time of preparation for the dance, Jane had discussed no one. Norma did relate, however, the incident of the portrait, causing Dorothy to experience the desire to batter down the wall between herself and the proud girl she had grown to love so dearly. On reflection she decided it would not be best. Jane had erected the barrier, therefore

it was incumbent on her to do away with it. Time alone could teach the perverse freshman that, once given, true friendship was a gift to be cherished, not abused.

When, at a little past four on Friday afternoon, Jane and Judith entered the gymnasium, they found an excited bevy of bloomer-clad freshmen already on the scene, industriously at work with the ball. The four sides of the large room were thickly sprinkled with spectators from all the classes, who had come to see what the freshmen could do. The sophomore team had already been organized. They were grouped together intently watching the players and commenting on their respective merits.

"Wait here for me," directed Judith. "I'm going to the dressing quarters to get into my regalia. I'll come back to you as soon as I'm togged for action." She had already donned her rubber-soled canvas shoes, and as she trotted across the room, her basket-ball suit swinging on one arm, Jane almost wished that she, too, could get into a like costume and run about the wide stretch of floor after the ball. Contrary to expectation, she was decidedly interested. She had not thought basket-ball would be like this.

Judith had just returned and stood explaining

to Jane the meaning of the various maneuvers the players were making, when a shrill whistle, blown by an imposing senior who wore eyeglasses, sent the active figures scurrying off the floor to the place reserved for them. The try-out was about to begin.

While she stood eagerly viewing the spirited play, Jane had identified at least three of the contestants. They were Adrienne, Marian Seaton and Alicia Reynolds. She also noted, when the judges took their station at a point in the room where they could best observe what went on, that Dorothy Martin was one of them. She now remembered that Judith had said that Dorothy was to serve in that capacity. The other two young women, seniors, she did not know.

As over half of the freshman class had designs on team membership, they were quickly divided into squads of five, and set to work, two squads at a time, the one to play against the other.

Jane thrilled with excitement as she heard the screech of the warning whistle and saw the ball put into play. After ten minutes' hard work, the players were called off the floor, to be replaced by a second ambitious ten. Altogether, thirty girls were tried out, while the selecting committee put their heads together and noted on paper

the most promising aspirants. These were finally sifted down to ten names, the owners of which formed two squads and strove against each other. Jane smiled with delight to see Judith and Adrienne among the favored ten. She frowned with disgust to find Marian Seaton and Alicia Reynolds also of that number.

When, after twenty minutes' desperate endeavor, the ten girls ran off to their corner, the judges consulted afresh, amid a loud buzzing of conversation on the part of the spectators. A hush fell upon the room at the sound of the whistle for silence. That meant that the freshman team had been selected and the names of the lucky members were to be announced.

It was one of the seniors who made the announcement. After a polite little speech which was intended as a consolation for the disappointed who had failed to play up to the demanded standard, she read out the names. Judith Stearns, Adrienne Dupree, Alicia Reynolds, Marian Seaton and Christine Ellis, an Argyle Hall girl, had been chosen to play on the official freshman team. Five other girls had been selected to play on a practice team and act as substitutes. Jane knew them, merely by sight.

A moment after the announcement, which was

received with some applause, Adrienne pranced up to Jane, looking like a frolicsome young sprite in her dark blue bloomer suit. "For me it is indeed the great joy that I, poor, small Adrienne, have been chosen," she gurgled. "Tell me, most serious one, how does my costume become me? I had it fashioned in the great hurry, by a most stupid dressmaker, who waited long to finish it. It is most comfortable in which to dance." She pirouetted gaily about Jane, keeping up a ripple of quaint remarks. "But you have not yet said how I look." She paused and fixed Jane with an expression of mock reproach.

"You look exactly like a tiny young imp," laughed Judith Stearns, who had come up in time to hear Adrienne's latest remark.

"You are of a truth droll, Judy," she giggled. "You have at last guessed the name that *mon père* loves to call me. At home, I am the great Imp. So you and Jane shall thus call me, if you wish. It is the pet name and I adore it. *Comprenez vous?*"

"Oui, ma chère énfant," returned Jane, her gloomy face lighting at the little girl's merry talk. *"Vous êtes vraiment le petit drôle."*

"Je vous ador. Vous parlez ma belle langue." Adrienne patted her hand.

"I wish I could speak French as well as Jane does," said Judith rather wistfully. "It's awfully hard for me. I can never remember the verbs."

"I wish *I* could play basket-ball like you and Adrienne," was Jane's astonishing retort.

"What do I hear?" Judith's lifted brows indicated her surprise. "Didn't I tell you you'd like the dear old game?"

"I do like it." Jane flushed as she made this confession. "I'd give half my kingdom to be on the freshman team. Of course I know that I never will be. But just the same, I'm going to learn to play, if only to please myself."

CHAPTER XVII

HELPING JANE'S CAUSE ALONG

WHEREAS basket-ball had at first been a matter of indifference to Jane, it now became a delightful obsession. Here was a phase of college life which she was quite willing to embrace. Reared to the activity of the ranch, the conventional monotony of her surroundings irked her beyond measure. Aside from her reckless gallops across country on Firefly, she had no other outlet for her stored-up energy. Basket-ball promised to supply a long-felt need. Still she could not play the game alone, and there seemed small prospect of being asked to serve even on a practice team.

When she had enrolled as a student of Wellington College, Jane had not wished to become friendly with any of her fellow-students. She had deliberately built up a wall between herself

and them. Now she wished she had not been in such a hurry to condemn them as scarcely worth her consideration. It was hard indeed to find herself a comparative outsider, especially since she had discovered that it prevented her from taking part in the sport which had so signally aroused her enthusiasm.

True, she was not entirely without friends. Adrienne, Judith, Norma Bennett and Ethel Lacey had become really dear to her. She had never believed that she could become so entirely at home in the society of girls. Hardly a day passed without bringing forth some new proof of their regard for her. She and Judith now frequently studied their lessons in company with Adrienne and Ethel, Norma Bennett often making a fifth. Jane was secretly amazed at the amount of good cheer that was to be extracted from a chafing dish. Judith was past master of the art of fudge-making, while Adrienne, true child of France, knew how to concoct a variety of appetizing dishes, which could be prepared in this same useful article, so dear to the heart of the school girl.

"We ought to have a stunt party, Jane," remarked Judith casually, one evening in early November. "I've been entertained by quite a

number of the girls outside the Hall, and I'd love to make some return." Judith spoke with her usual placidity, but inwardly she was far from being calm. She was not sure that Jane would look upon the proposal with favor. Of an extremely sociable disposition, Judith had hitherto refrained from inviting a number of her friends to her room for a jollification, for fear of displeasing her roommate.

"What is a stunt party?" Jane looked up from her book, a curious gleam in her gray eyes.

"Oh, it's a sort of social session." Judith was relieved to observe that Jane was not frowning. "Everyone who comes has to do a stunt. Sing, or recite, or dance. Perhaps tell an interesting story. Then we have eats, of course, and everybody goes home happy at the very last minute before the ten-thirty bell. Eight girls will be about as many as this room will comfortably hold. If we have too many, it won't be so much fun. Let me see. There are Adrienne and Ethel, Norma of course, Mary Ashton, Barbara Temple, Christine Ellis, you and I. If it weren't for Marian Seaton and Alicia Reynolds, I'd invite the girls of the freshman team on another evening, but those two dear creatures make it quite out of the question. I'd as soon think of

inviting a snapping turtle, or a nice wriggly snake, as either of them." Judith giggled cheerfully as she made this unflattering comparison.

"The idea of a stunt party sounds interesting." Jane wagged her head in serious approval of Judith's plan. "Speaking of snakes," she went on slowly, "that reminds me of something that happened to me just before I came east to Wellington. It was on my last day at home. I went for a long ride. All the time I kept wishing that I might be given some last lucky sign to show that all would go well for me this year. It came, but in the form of a huge rattlesnake. Very lucky, wasn't it? At any rate, I killed it. I remembered then that snakes meant enemies. So you see it was a true omen," ended Jane bitterly.

"How strange!" Judith's eyes had grown round with wonder as she listened to Jane's recital. "If you were brave enough to kill a great, horrible rattlesnake, you are certainly brave enough to conquer your enemies. I couldn't kill even a garter snake." Judith shuddered at the bare idea of dispatching even this harmless variety of reptile.

"I've killed lots of rattlesnakes," returned Jane. "They're a common sight out West, but so far I've made plenty of enemies, and haven't

conquered one of them. I never thought I'd care about——" Jane hesitated. "About girls," she went on slowly. "Perhaps I wouldn't, even yet, if I had not found such nice friends as you and Adrienne and Ethel. What I do care a lot about is basket-ball. I'd love to be on a team, Judy, even if it were only a scrub team." Jane made this confession rather shame-facedly.

"I understand." Judith struggled to keep the surprise she felt out of her voice. Proud, reserved Jane Allen had at last come to her senses. She wished to be liked, in order that she might play basket-ball, and she was making an indirect appeal to Judith to help her to that end. It was the nearest approach to a favor that she had ever asked. Judith wondered how she might best serve her roommate. Then she reflected that the stunt party might do much toward helping Jane's cause along. She and Christine were on the regular team, while Barbara Temple captained the practice squad against which the picked team had been playing.

"Wait until the night of the stunt party," she now counseled. "I'll casually introduce the subject to the girls. Barbara told me yesterday that Lillian Barrows was ill and might not be able to play for a week or so. Perhaps you might take

her place on the practice team. I forgot, though. You don't know much about the game. That's too bad. You'd have to work on a scrub team first. The practice team has to do really fast playing."

"But I *do* know the game!" Jane's tones carried repressed excitement. "I sent for an official guide book on basket-ball the day after the try-out. I've been studying it ever since it came. I know every point. All I ask is a chance to play. I'm so sorry I didn't go to the gym with you girls when you were teaching Adrienne. Then I could have tried to make the team, too. It's my own fault." Jane frowned darkly.

"Never mind," comforted Judith. "There's no use in worrying over that now. What you must do is to try to get a chance to play on the practice team. If you become a star player and anything were to happen to one of the regular team, you might be asked to play in her place. Of course, that's all very indefinite. Still, it wouldn't do any harm to work and get ready. The date for the big game hasn't been set. Very likely it will be played early in December. Dorothy Martin told me the other day that there was some talk of holding a series of games between the freshmen and sophomores for a pennant. That would be

lots of fun and wildly exciting. It would keep basket-ball to the front all year."

"I don't expect to have a chance to play on the regular team this year." Jane spoke very humbly. "Besides it wouldn't be right for me even to dream of it when it would mean supplanting one of the regular girls." For all her moods, Jane had the virtue of being strictly honorable even in thought.

"But suppose one of us were suddenly taken ill or had to go home," argued Judith. "You'd have a perfect right to substitute, if your playing warranted it. As long as you like basket-ball so much, go in and learn it for all you're worth. Don't bother to think about what might happen. Just be ready. If your chance should come, take it. If not, then you'll be in line for next year's team. But there is one thing you will have to do, if you hope to make good on any team." Judith paused and eyed Jane significantly.

"I know." Jane colored hotly. "You needn't say it. I'll try, Judy; truly I will."

"There's something else you ought to do," pursued Judith relentlessly.

"What do you mean?" Jane's sharp question indicated that there were several things Judith might mean.

"You ought to square yourself with Dorothy Martin. I'm not saying that because I wish to pry into your affairs," apologized Judith. "You really need Dorothy's friendship. You two were such good comrades. Then, too, Dorothy is such a splendid girl and could help you in so many ways."

"I don't wish Dorothy Martin's help." Jane shook her head with stubborn decision. "I can get along very well without it." She had no intention of taking even Judith into her confidence concerning her grievance against Dorothy. Neither would she admit how greatly she missed the latter's inspiring companionship. If there were any question as to which of them should sue for peace, she would never be the suppliant. Dorothy had done her a wrong, therefore Dorothy alone could right it.

Realizing that though she had made her first point she had failed to make the second, Judith wisely dropped the subject and began to plan cheerfully for the stunt party. "We'd better give it on next Monday night," she decided. "I'll have my allowance money by that time. That's a very necessary thing when it comes to giving a party."

"I have plenty of money," reminded Jane. "I

haven't yet spent half of my last check. There's nothing much to spend money for here."

"I wish I could say that," sighed Judith. "My check looks like a good deal of money when I first see it. But after it's cashed it simply melts like snow in the sun."

"That's because you can find so many ways to spend it. You're a social success, Judy, and I'm not."

"You could be if you would," declared Judith staunchly.

Jane merely shook her head in mute contradiction. She had not Judith's ability for making friends.

As the week wore away, however, she found herself looking forward to Friday night with considerable anticipation. Judith had decreed that the affair must be a stunt party. She had already announced that her contribution to the affair would be a funny little monologue she had once given at a stunt party while at Morrison Preparatory School. Jane racked her brain for a stunt suitable to the occasion. Finally she hit upon an idea that seemed feasible, and after a visit to her trunk, laid her plan before Judith. The latter was in raptures over it. She forthwith lost no time in informing the guests that a

costume party was in order and that no one could hope to gain admittance to the festal chamber unless properly conforming to her edict.

For the first time Jane began to experience the feeling of delight with which a girl looks forward to her first party. Never before had she been active in bringing about an affair of the kind which the coming Friday promised. The few hops she had attended at various Western summer resorts in company with her Aunt Mary had invariably bored her. True, she had in a measure enjoyed herself at the freshman dance. The stunt party, however, was to be quite different from any other she had ever attended. And it was her suggestion to Judith that had inspired at least one feature of it. Jane could not help being a trifle pleased over this. At heart she was just as eager for simple, wholesome entertainment as any other girl of her age. She suspected this dimly, but nothing could have induced her to say so to Judith. Although she could not then know it, her restless longing for variety was destined to one day make her a brilliant leader whose name was to be set down on the honor roll of Wellington's brightest and best. But it was alike decreed that she should not reach this height until the last battle against self should be fought and won.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STUNT PARTY

AT half-past seven o'clock on Monday evening, two gaily attired damsels, quite foreign in appearance to their usual everyday selves, stole cat-footed down the hall and were admitted to Judith's room amid much stifled laughter. They were received by an awe-inspiring person whose huge, shell-rimmed glasses and severe mannish attire proclaimed to them that a reformer of no mean pretensions had condescended to grace the scene.

Attired in plain black skirt, topped by Jane's black riding coat, this particular disciple of reform was distinctly imposing. The coat was artistically thrown open to disclose a marvelous expanse of white pleated shirt front. With a stand-up collar and black bow tie, her brown hair dragged upward into a tortured knot, until the

corners of her blue eyes fairly seemed to follow that upward slant, Judith was a sight to behold. Beside her stood a ferocious Indian chief, whose feathered headdress and formidable tomahawk might well have proclaimed him to be one of the immortal redskins of Fenimore Cooper lore, except that these fabled warriors were not recorded to possess luminous gray eyes and femininely regular features.

"How!" grunted the warrior, in polite welcome as a fluffy-skirted premiere of the ballet seized his august hand and gurgled her fluent French admiration of him.

"Ladies, be seated," invited the reformer's dignified voice. "The worst, I mean the rest, is yet to come." This information trailed off into a most un-reformer-like giggle.

"Judy Stearns, you are the funniest thing I ever saw." Ethel Lacey, transformed for the time being into a broadly-smiling gypsy, a violin tucked under her arm, accepted the invitation to sit and broke into a fresh burst of chuckles which had begun the moment she spied Judith. "As for Jane, she looks fierce enough to tomahawk a whole settlement."

"Ah, but she is *le grand sauvage!*" exclaimed Adrienne. "But hark! Someone knocks."

Judith hurried to the door to admit two raincoated figures, their heads discreetly scarf-wrapped. Divested of their coats and scarfs, a golden-haired Dresden shepherdess and an elegant Turkish-trousered lady, with a flowing, rippling veil, burst upon the scene. On the campus they were known respectively as Christine Ellis and Barbara Temple, but for to-night they had sunk their identities to play the favorite childhood game of "dressing up."

They were welcomed with due ceremony and had hardly begun to take stock of their companions when a timid rapping at the door announced the arrival of another guest.

A ripple of approbation swept the little company as a black clad figure of princely mien stepped across the threshold. Was it really Norma Bennett who had entered, or had Hamlet, the ill-starred Prince of Denmark, suddenly come to life? Norma had copied her costume, so far as she was able, from one she had seen in a picture. Though of common black cambric, she had fashioned it so cleverly that the material was forgotten in the general effect. Long black stockings and flat-heeled slippers, an old circular cape she had discovered hanging in the back hall and a quaint cap of her own making helped to

carry out the representation. Around her neck hung a heavy silver chain that had been her mother's. The crowning glory of her costume, however, was a wide flat-linked metal belt from which depended a sheathed short sword.

"For goodness' sake, Norma Bennett, wherever did you manage to lay hands on that belt and sword?" Judith forgot her dignity as she called out her eager question.

"Isn't it splendid?" The melancholy look on Norma's face, which went so completely with her representation, vanished in a pleased smile. "You'll laugh when I tell you. Sarah, the cook, lent it to me."

"She looks fierce enough to harbor such deadly weapons," laughed Ethel. "I can't imagine them being of this ancient type, though."

"It was used long ago by some of the girls here who gave 'Hamlet' for their own amusement," explained Norma. "The girl who owned the belt and sword was a senior. After she was graduated and left the Hall, it was found hanging in her closet. She never sent for it and it was put in the storeroom. When I told Sarah about my costume, she remembered it and got it for me. Wasn't I lucky? It was the one thing needed to complete poor Hamlet."

"But *la petite* Norma is indeed as the real Hamlet!" admired Adrienne. "She has the sad eyes, the bearing of *le pauvre* Prince of Denmark."

"She has indeed," echoed Jane warmly. She was secretly wondering at Norma's ability to do so much with so little.

"Now that Hamlet is with us, there is only one distinguished personage missing," said Ethel. "She's commonly known as Mary Ashton, but who knows who she may be to-night?"

"There she is now!" cried Barbara Temple as a knock sounded on the door.

A quaint Japanese person in a gorgeous flowered silk kimono and obi sidled into their midst, giggling deliciously behind her fluttering fan. With her straight, high-coiffured black hair and heavy-browed black eyes, Mary Ashton might well have stepped off the painted fan she fluttered.

"Now I'll put up the 'Busy' sign," announced Judith with a relieved sigh. After triumphantly bolting the door she proceeded to climb on a chair and hang her striped bed cover over it, fastening it with several brass-headed tacks. "There!" she exclaimed. "This is a strictly private affair. If some of the girls find out what's going on they

may be tempted to take a bird's-eye squint through the keyhole. I wish I knew where the key is. Anyway, the bolt will keep out intruders and the curtain will deaden the sounds of revelry within. It's a good thing for us that this is an end room."

Reassuming the judicial air she had for the moment dropped, she began in a deep voice: "Distinguished friends, we welcome you to our humble cot. What is your pleasure? Don't all speak at once. Our watchword to-night must be the greatest enjoyment with the least noise. Individual stunts are not included in this, but concert acclamation must be gentle and ladylike."

"Let's have a grand looking-over first, then do our stunts," proposed Mary Ashton. "The earlier we get them out of the way, the better it will be for us. Afterward, if our gracious hostesses have kindly remembered that we are human and very fond of eating, we can settle down to food and not be so noisy. You know how quiet descends around here after nine-thirty."

"That's wise advice from a mere Oriental," laughed Judith. "Go ahead, children, and stare one another out of countenance."

The strangely assorted company proceeded to carry out Judith's invitation, accompanying the

looking-over with frequent bursts of laughter and much explaining as to costumes. While they were thus engaged Judith and Jane busied themselves in lining up the chairs at one end of the room, with a view to allowing as much space as possible for the performance of the stunts.

"If you will kindly seat yourselves, the show will now begin," announced Judith. "The noisiest artiste will please hold forth first."

"That will perhaps be I," concluded Adrienne. "I shall perform the steps of the ballet, while my clever Ethel shall make the music. Of a truth, I dance lightly, but the voice of the violin is of some noise. Still we have practiced in our room and no one has noticed."

"We shall be pleased to witness the dance," boomed Judith, inclining her maltreated head toward Adrienne with wooden graciousness.

Ethel obediently tucked her violin under her chin, drew the bow across the strings in a soft chord, then began the beautiful ballet music from "Le Cid." Adrienne pirouetted gracefully into the open space on her toes. Pausing for an instant, like a white butterfly about to take flight, she began an exhibition of terpischorean art that held her watchers fairly breathless with wondering admiration. Back and forth she floated,

whirling, bending, swaying, her tiny feet appearing scarcely to touch the floor. To the entranced watchers she seemed a direct importation from fairyland, allowed for a brief season to leave her beautiful realm of fancy and show herself among mortals. It was not her dancing which so strongly conveyed this idea to them. The little girl's elfish personality had more to do with producing the illusion.

Concluding her remarkable exhibition with a peculiar leaping run on her toes, her slender arms outstretched as though she had at last actually taken wing, Adrienne dropped gracefully into her chair. "It is not then so easy to dance on the carpet," she murmured plaintively.

"Did you dance?" inquired Jane soberly. "It seemed to me that you flew."

"Ah, that is quite the sweet compliment." Adrienne dimpled with pleasure. Her further speech was drowned in a buzz of warm approval from the others. The tiny danseuse garnered admiration from all sides at once.

"It is too much!" She raised two prettily protesting hands. "Would that you might see *ma mère!* Little Adrienne must then of a necessity be forgotten."

"No one could forget *your* dancing," smiled

Barbara Temple. "I wish you'd do it all over again."

"But no, there is yet much to be done," reminded Adrienne modestly. "Let us hurry on to another of the stunts. Who has yet one of some noise to give?" She glanced inquiringly about.

"You'd better do yours next, Jane," advised Judith. "It's not exactly quiet."

"Very well." Outwardly composed, Jane stalked to the center of the room. She was inwardly quaking, however, at facing at least three girls whom she hardly knew. Posing for a brief second, she began a curious, sing-song chant and swung into one of the weird dances she had learned from seeing them performed by the Indians on a reservation not far from El Capitan. Gradually warming to her work, she left her present surroundings behind, seeing only the grotesque figures of the painted dancers gyrating madly in the moonlight of a perfect Western night.

The last eerie, wavering note of the chant brought her back to a knowledge of where she was. "That's all," she stammered somewhat confusedly and made a dive for the chair on which she had been sitting when the stunts began. She

was, therefore, quite unprepared for the ovation she received. She had not reckoned that her stunt would elicit much applause. All her life she had seen Indians dance, and thought little of it.

Mary Ashton next toddled to the front and sang a Japanese song of several verses, accompanying it with much graceful fan play.

"Where in the world did you ever learn all that Japanese, Mary?" wondered Christine when Mary had finished singing and been duly praised.

Mary giggled. "You had no idea I could speak Japanese, now had you? I'm sorry to inform you that I can't."

"Then who taught you that song?" demanded Christine.

"I made it up," confessed Mary. "I'm extravagantly proud of it, though. It sounds like the real thing." She beamed cheerfully.

"You ridiculous fraud! I might have known it." Christine looked supremely disgusted.

"I'm anything but a fraud," contested Mary. "I never told you it *was* a Japanese song. I'm not to blame if you took it for one. I think I deserve a great deal of credit for making it up. It took me a whole evening to learn it, too."

"Did you make up the tune, too?" teased Barbara.

"No, I borrowed that from a song I used to sing in my grammar school days. I decided on my tune first, and then made up the words to fit. I'm sorry I can't translate them, but unfortunately I haven't the least idea what it's all about." Mary's infectious giggle went the round of the party.

"You're next, Barbara," stated Judith. "We must on with the stunts or we'll not have time for the eats."

Barbara's contribution to the affair was also in the nature of a dance. It was a slow, stately affair of many postures, and she used her long veil with graceful effect. She had seen a similar dance performed by a famous Oriental dancer and had been so taken with it that she had afterward tried to imitate it, as far as her memory would allow, with the idea of some time using it at a stunt party.

Christine Ellis followed her with a clever monologue, depicting the coming to life of a Dresden shepherdess who had grown weary of being merely an ornament and decided to walk about after the household had gone to rest for the night. Her stiff-legged imitation of the re-

bellious shepherdess, who after standing still all her life found walking a difficult matter, was funny in the extreme, and her song, "It's no fun being a Shepherdess," which she warbled in a high, delicate little voice, supposedly belonging to a lady of such ornamental pretensions, sent the girls into muffled shrieks of mirth.

"You are all star performers," lauded Judith, when Christine had finally subsided after being obliged to sing her song twice. "Now, Norma."

"Mine isn't much of a stunt," demurred Norma as she advanced rather reluctantly to the center of the impromptu stage. Rather hesitatingly she began Hamlet's melancholy solioquy, but she had not proceeded far before her hearers realized that they were listening to an unusually fine rendition of the immortal Shakespeare's words. Perhaps it was due to the fact that her own short life had been made up of a continual succession of doubts and fears that Norma put into the lines the pent-up anguish of a tormented soul. The silence that followed her last word caused her to wonder if, after all, she had attempted something which lay beyond her power to do justice.

"That was really wonderful, Norma." Jane's earnest tribute broke the spell.

"Why, Norma Bennett, I never dreamed you

could recite like that!" cried Mary Ashton. "I predict that you'll make the Dramatic Club the minute they find you out. You quiet little thing! You'd have gone right on hiding your light under a bushel, too, if it hadn't been for this stunt party."

"*La petite* Norma has the Heaven-sent talent," bubbled Adrienne. "You will perhaps one day enter the profession, *ma cherie.*"

"Don't let's talk about me," protested Norma, rosy red. She was a trifle bewildered at her unexpected success. "See, it's nine o'clock. We have no time to spare." Her warning served to check the tide of approbation and she was relieved when Judith motioned to Ethel Lacey to take the floor.

"You first, Judy," said Ethel. "Mine is a last variety kind of feature."

Judith strode majestically to the fore and setting her good-natured face into the stony expression of one with a resolute duty to perform, delivered a capital lecture on "The College Girl and the Reform Movement." As Judith's proposed reforms were purely of a local nature, her sage counsel tended to convulse rather than impress. The more energetically she waved her arms and drove home her points, the wilder grew

the mirth of her listeners. She was forced, therefore, to conclude her address somewhat hurriedly and endeavor to bring order out of the disorder she had created.

"Stop laughing, girls," she entreated. "If you don't you'll have Mrs. Weatherbee here in about three minutes." Catching sight of herself in the mirror, she could not refrain from laughing a little, too. "A lot of good it does to talk reform to such a disrespectful audience."

"Go away back and sit down, Judy, if you expect us to behave," chuckled Barbara. "Just to look at you makes me positively hysterical."

"Go ahead, Ethel." Judith grinned broadly and accepted the advice.

"My stunt is fortune-telling," announced Ethel. Drawing a chair directly under the light, she continued winningly: "Come, pretty ladies, let the poor gypsy read your palms."

The "pretty ladies" needed no second invitation. They flocked about Ethel, eager palms extended.

"While Ethel reads their palms, you and I will get the feast ready," proposed Jane to Judith. "She can read ours afterward."

Judith nodded and the two girls began the

pleasant task of setting forth the good cheer they had provided in honor of the guests.

While Ethel predicted startling futures for at least five girls, a lavish array of toothsome delicacies was being spread invitingly out on the study table by Jane's nimble fingers. Judith had taken charge of the making of the chocolate, and by the time Jane had completed her labor of hospitality, her roommate announced that it was ready. Happening to glance in Judith's direction, Jane observed that which caused her to emit a soft chuckle.

"What are you laughing at?" Judith marked the chuckle and inquired into the cause.

"I'll tell you later." Jane straightened her face and joined the fortune-seeking group.

"I'll be through in a minute." Ethel looked up from Christine's pink palm. "You will live to be at least a hundred," she assured gravely, "but you will never marry. The absence of your heart line indicates that you have no heart. So you can't possibly fall in love. This line shows that you will very soon be asked to sit at a table where——"

"You're invited this minute," interrupted Judith. "Come on, girls. Christine, you'll have

to postpone further dark revelations of your future until after eats."

"I know as much about it now as a certain fortune-teller, whose name I won't mention," laughed Christine.

"No one ever appreciates a seeress," retorted Ethel. "Powers of second sight are wasted on most persons. I won't mention names, either."

"Very polite, both of you," jeered Barbara.

"I love to read palms, but oh you spread!" confessed Ethel. "Hard work has made me hungry."

That she was not the only hungry one was soon plainly manifest. No one of the eight girls complained of a failing appetite, as they gathered about the table.

"Please pour the chocolate, Judy," requested Jane, a sly twinkle in her gray eyes.

Judith amiably rose to her duty. It was then that she made an appalling discovery. The china chocolate pot had mysteriously vanished.

"Why, where can it be?" Judith cast a startled look at Jane, as though suspecting her of black magic. "It was here a minute ago. Jane Allen, you hid it."

"I haven't touched it." Jane was now laughing openly.

"Then where is it?" Judith's eyes desperately searched the room. The amazement in them deepened as she saw Jane approach the closet, open the door and draw from the depths the missing adjunct to the feast.

A little scream of glee went up from the girls. They understood perfectly what had happened.

"I knew I'd do something," muttered Judith, her fair face very red.

"I saw you when you did it," declared Jane, amusement written on every feature. "It struck me as being so funny I decided not to say a word."

"What I meant to do was to put the sugar-box back in the closet," explained Judith sheepishly. "I was so busy trying to hear what Ethel was telling Adrienne that—well—I made a slight mistake. It's a good thing you saw me, Jane. I would never have thought of looking in there for the missing chocolate pot."

Judith's "slight mistake" served to help the fun along. It was a wondrous merry little feast and when it came to an end at twenty-five minutes past ten the chocolate pot was empty and only one lone sandwich remained to keep company with a forlorn trio of macaroons.

"We didn't have our fortunes told after all,"

reminded Jane, as the door closed on the last guest.

"That's nothing. I never said a word to Barbara about basket-ball," was Judith's penitent cry. "I forgot all about it."

"Oh, never mind." Jane tried to cloak the slight disappointment she felt with an assumption of cheerful indifference. She had not forgotten, even if Judith had failed to remember. "Perhaps it was just as well that you didn't mention it. I'd hate to have any of those girls get the idea that I was trying to crowd in where I wasn't wanted."

"None of them would think that." Judith shook her head. "They aren't that sort. I'll have a talk with Barbara to-morrow. She told me to-night that she thought you were perfectly lovely, and that she was so glad of a chance to know you better."

"Did she say that?" Jane flushed with delight. She was rapidly learning that approval of herself was very sweet. "I think she is a splendid girl. I'd love to play on her team."

"And so you shall," promised Judith. "I'll see that you get your chance to play or my name is not Judy Stearns."

CHAPTER XIX

THE WINNING FIGHT

JUDITH lost no time in putting her promise into execution. The very next afternoon, her recitations over for the day, she set out for Argyle Hall to call on Barbara. Finding her alone in her room, Judith came directly to the point, confiding to Barbara Jane's ambition to play on the practice team.

"I hadn't the least idea Miss Allen wished to play basket-ball." Barbara looked interested surprise. "Why didn't she try to make the team?"

"She didn't even know how to play, then. She wasn't interested," admitted Judith. "It was the try-out that aroused her interest. She sent for an official basket-ball guide and has been studying it ever since."

"But she can't hope to play even on a practice

team without some actual experience," demurred Barbara.

"Jane says she is sure she can make good if she has the chance," pleaded Judith. "I believe she can, too. She is strong and lithe as an Indian. You must remember she has been brought up on a ranch. She can run and ride and handle a lariat like a cowboy. She ought to take easily to basket-ball. Won't you try her on the practice team in Lillian's place?"

"Supose, after a trial, she doesn't make good?" Barbara spoke doubtfully. "She is so—so—peculiar, she might become very angry if I told her she wouldn't do. Personally, I'm agreeably disappointed in her. Before I met her I'd heard she was awfully proud and disagreeable. I thought her actually beautiful and fascinating last night."

"She's a wonderful girl," was Judith's earnest assurance. "Norma, Adrienne and I are so fond of her. She's queer sometimes; not a bit like any other girl I've ever known. She has a frightful temper. I don't mean by that she scolds and rages. When she's angry she never says a word, just glowers like a thundercloud."

"I've heard of her famous scowl." Barbara smiled reminiscently.

"That's merely an unfortunate habit," defended Judith. "You see, she'd never known many girls until she came here." Judith launched into a brief sketch of Jane, ending with, "If she shouldn't make good at practice you needn't be afraid to tell her. She's too sensible to get angry over that."

"Very well, Judy, I'll take her on just to please you," nodded Barbara. "Tell her to report at the gym at four o'clock this afternoon for practice. Has she a gym suit?"

"Thank you, Barbara. You're a darling!" Judith beamed joyfully. "Yes, she has one. If you don't mind, I wish you'd write her a note. She would like that, I know."

For answer, Barbara went to her writing desk and sitting down before it, penned a friendly note of invitation to Jane. "Here you are, Judy. Anything else I can do for you?"

"No, indeed. You've already proved yourself a perfect treasure. I hope I can some day do something in return for this." She patted the note.

After Judith had taken her leave, Barbara indulged in a little serious thought. Anxious to oblige good-natured Judy, who was always so ready to help others, she wondered if she had

acted wisely. She had hardly liked to repeat to the latter the many harsh criticisms of Jane she had heard on the campus. The fact that Jane Allen was plentifully endowed with good looks, wore exquisite clothes and had more money than she could spend, had not advanced her popularity at Wellington. Instead, she was disliked, feared, and, as Barbara now honestly believed, misunderstood. If she had not been possessed of some redeeming traits, it stood to reason that Judith would hardly have become her staunch ally. According to rumor Jane had not treated her roommate very cordially in the beginning.

"I'll take Judy's word for it," Barbara murmured half aloud. "If the rest of the girls on the team make a fuss, I'll simply tell them that as captain I've a right to do as I please in appointing a sub until Lillian comes back. I'll not say a word to them beforehand. I'll call practice the minute she arrives. Then they won't have a chance to talk it over until afterward. If she plays well—I hope to goodness she will—then they won't care so much. Perhaps it will be all right, anyway. But Jane shall have her chance. I've promised Judy, and I'll keep my word."

If Barbara had been present in the room when

Judith handed Jane her note she would have felt wholly repaid for her kindly decision. Jane read it through a mist of happy tears, that sprang unbidden to her gray eyes. It was really true. At last she was to have her wish. Barbara Temple was willing for her to substitute on the practice team until Lillian returned.

"How can I ever thank you, Judy?" she faltered. She would have liked to hug the placidly smiling Judith, but her inner reticence held her back. She could only look her intense gratitude.

"By playing up to the reputation I gave you," returned Judith bluntly. "I had to tell Barbara that you'd never played. I don't imagine she'll say a word of it to the others. Just be on the alert, and act as though you'd played basket-ball all your life."

"I can play. I know I can." Jane's tones were deeply positive. "If I find that I'm wrong about it, I'll give up the ghost as gracefully as I can. I won't wait to be asked to resign."

"That's a sensible way to look at it," approved Judith. Recalling Barbara's doubts, she was relieved to hear Jane make this statement. "You must try to do your level best. Next Saturday afternoon the practice team will work against

the regular freshman squad. Then, look out!"

"I know." Jane understood only too well the significance of her roommate's reminder. With Marian Seaton and Alicia Reynolds on the official team she was quite likely to encounter squalls. "I'll be a pioneer player," she added laughingly. Her face suddenly clouded. The word "pioneer" was synonymous with Dorothy Martin. She could not help wishing that all was well between herself and Dorothy. The Dorothy she had first known would have rejoiced at the good fortune that had come to her. Jane resolutely thrust the now offending junior from her thoughts. Her pride whispered that she had now no desire for Dorothy's approval.

The gymnasium clock was ringing out the hour of four when a tall, russet-haired girl, looking a trifle less than her usual height by reason of her trim navy blue bloomer suit, hung her smart tan raincoat on a hook in the dressing room and stepped confidently out upon the floor.

"I'm glad you're here," welcomed Barbara Temple. She had seen Jane emerge from the dressing room and had trotted across the wide floor to meet her. "I saw you come in, but was busy just then. Come with me. I wish you to meet the other girls."

Taking Jane by the arm, she piloted her across the room to where a group of three young women stood, their heads together in absorbed conversation. Jane now knew them all by name, but had never met any of them. She now had an uncomfortable feeling that they had been discussing her.

"Miss Allen, this is Miss Swayne, Miss Hurst and Miss Westcott. Girls, this is Miss Allen. She is going to play left forward until Lillian is able to come back to the team."

The trio acknowledged the introduction politely but with no show of cordiality. Jane experienced a desire to frown fiercely and retire into her shell. It was evident that she was not welcome. Recollection of her promise to Judith to do her level best caused her to greet her teammates in outwardly serene fashion.

"Suppose we go to work at once," suggested Barbara. She did not intend to give the three an opportunity to question Jane regarding her capabilities as a player. It would be quite like Olive Hurst to inquire how long and where Jane had played basket-ball.

Thanks to her careful study of the game, Jane knew exactly where to take up her position of left forward, and when the ball was put in play

she went to work with a will. So far as agility and fleetness of foot went, it soon became apparent that she could more than hold her own. She was obliged to listen intently, however, for the orders that Barbara continually called out. Later, when she had learned more by actual practice, Jane was confident that her playing would be fast enough for even the regular team.

"You are doing splendidly," Barbara whispered to her during a brief resting spell. "No one would suspect you of never having played before."

"I love it." Jane flashed her a brilliant smile of such sheer happiness that Barbara felt fully repaid for her effort to please Judith. "I am anxious to learn everything I can about it. Of course the signals bother me now, and I'm not always sure what to do next. Another day or two of practice and I'll be in much better trim."

"You play very well, Miss Allen." Olive Hurst had come up while Jane was speaking. "I suppose you have played——"

"Let us try that new play I was telling you of, Olive," interrupted Barbara. She blew a sharp blast on a small whistle, calling the other two girls from one end of the gymnasium.

Jane understood that Barbara had purposely

interrupted Olive and was grateful. She could hardly have evaded answering her without giving offense. Here it seemed was a fresh proof that one girl could be very loyal to another in time of need.

Practice lasted until half-past five. When it was over Jane walked as far as Argyle Hall with Barbara, asking numerous questions about basket-ball which showed how greatly her interest had centered in the fascinating sport.

"Don't forget we practice again to-morrow," called Barbara after her as she turned to seek the Hall, there to regale Judith with an account of all that had taken place.

"As though I could forget *that*," she murmured as she hurried across the campus in the soft fall darkness. As she sped lightly along, filled with a quiet elation for her recent success, it came to her forcibly that, after all, she was glad she had come to Wellington. She began to understand dimly that in this new life, against which she had rebelled so bitterly, there were to be found many pleasures hitherto undreamed. At home she had but to ask and whatever she desired was promptly made hers, but here one had to work for that which one coveted. Influence and money might open some few doors, but true worth was the

only key to those she aspired to open. How disagreeable and disobliging she had been. Jane blushed hotly when she recalled her cavalier treatment of Judith on that first hard day. How glad she was that they had now become such fast friends. How much she owed to Judith. No wonder her roommate was well liked! She deserved to be. Jane vowed within herself to follow Judith's example. Then she, too, would be liked and respected.

For the next few days she went about her usual routine of study in a beatific state of mind. Everything progressed so smoothly and pleasantly that it fairly amazed her to think that she had so recently despised college. This unusually tranquil state of affairs was largely due to the fact that Jane had missed running afoul of anything more disagreeable than being obliged to sit at the same table with Edith Hammond and Dorothy Martin. She had grown used to that, however, and Adrienne's presence greatly assisted in lightening the strain which would otherwise have been extremely unpleasant.

Adrienne was openly jubilant over Jane's advent to the practice team, and said considerable about it at meals. Dorothy listened and was honestly glad that Jane was carving a niche for

herself at Wellington. She regretted only that she could not tell her so. Although Jane did not know it, the generous junior had said more than one good word for her, and had conscienciously kept a starboard watch on her. She felt that some day things would right themselves between herself and Jane.

Edith Hammond had no such tender regard for the "wild, woolly cowgirl," as she was fond of terming her. At the first inkling she caught of the news that Jane was playing on the practice team, she thoughtfully carried the information to Marian Seaton. Marian had laughed spitefully when she heard it. Further inquiry developed the fact that Jane was more than holding her own on the team. Marian smiled even more hatefully at this and bided her time. She had definitely decided upon one thing at least.

Saturday afternoon found a goodly audience of students from all four classes lining the sides of the gymnasium and partially filling the front seats of the gallery. Though the game to be played between the practice and regular teams was not in itself important, still it held enough interest to draw many students to the scene of action.

The freshman team had already procured their

official uniforms for the season. They were of dark green, the blouses ornamented with a large yellow F, as green and gold were the freshman colors for 19—. The practice team wore their usual gymnasium suits, which luckily were all of dark blue. Dorothy Martin had been asked to act as referee, and two other upper class girls were to be score and timekeepers.

As Jane Allen stood with the others of her team, waiting for the game to begin, she could hardly credit her good fortune. Was it really true that when the referee's whistle sounded she would become a part of the game to which she had so eagerly looked forward? Five minutes more and she would be in the thick of the fray, struggling with all her might for the honor of her squad. She hoped they would win, of course, even though three of her friends were on the opposing side. As for Marian Seaton and Alicia Reynolds, she would heartily enjoy worsting them.

The ball was already in Dorothy Martin's hands for the toss-up. The first blast of her whistle would call the two squads to their places. Then——

Her eyes fixed on Dorothy, who had raised the whistle to her lips, Jane saw that which changed

her alert, happy face into its old frowning mask. Marian Seaton and Alicia Reynolds had closed about Dorothy and were addressing her in low but vehement tones. With them was another girl whom Jane did not know. She was dressed in a dark blue bloomer suit and looked as though she might be a substitute player. Jane saw Dorothy start, flush, then glance uneasily in her direction. Marian Seaton was also regarding her, triumphant malice in her pale blue eyes. Jane returned the look with all the scornful hatred she could summon. Marian merely smiled sneeringly, then went on talking rapidly to Dorothy.

"Barbara Temple, look!" exclaimed Olive Hurst. "There's Lillian. I didn't know she intended to play. I thought——" Jane's level gaze caused her to break off in sudden embarrassment.

Barbara *had* looked at Olive's command. Now she was heading straight for the trio clustered about Dorothy.

"Oh, Barbara, I was just going to call you over here." Dorothy's usually placid voice shook with annoyance. "Miss Seaton tells me that Miss Barrows has decided to play on her team this afternoon. I am afraid I shall have to ask you

to straighten out this tangle. It's really not in my province as referee."

Surprise and annoyance held Barbara dumb for an instant.

"I came just in time, didn't I?" asked Lillian cheerfully. "When Marian boasted to me that our team was due to get a whipping, I decided I was well enough to do my share toward proving her in the wrong. I wrote a note to you saying I'd be on hand, but it looks as though you didn't receive it." She rolled a pair of innocent blue eyes in Jane's direction.

"No, I did *not* receive it," snapped Barbara. She was growing angrier every second. Knowing something of Marian's attitude toward Jane Allen, she readily saw through the former's contemptible method of revenge. Yet what was she to do? Lillian was a regular member of the squad, while Jane was merely her substitute. "Did you send it by a messenger, and when?" she asked with curt directness.

"I mailed it," was the serene answer.

Barbara noted that Lillian's reply did not cover the question she had asked. Determined to pin her down to a definite statement, Barbara repeated: "When did you mail it?"

"Really, Miss Temple," broke in Marian Sea-

ton coldly, "I think your question is rather impolite. From it one might gather that you were not anxious for Lillian to take her rightful place on the team. It is surely not her fault *if* you have not received her note." The emphasis on the "if" implied doubt. "I happen to know that she wrote it, also that she handed it to me yesterday to mail for her. I think she deserves a great deal of credit for coming to play to-day after she has been so ill." Marian neglected to add that she had postponed mailing the note until noon that day.

"Miss Barrows is welcome to play to-day if she chooses." Barbara shrugged her shoulders. "I have no desire to prevent her. I will tell Miss Allen that she will not be needed. Wait just a moment, Dorothy, before you signal the game. I wish to explain matters to Jane." Barbara walked away from the detested trio, her brown head held high. She felt ready to cry out of sheer vexation. She dreaded to speak the words that would bring humiliation to Jane. It was a burning shame, she angrily reflected. Jane was already a far better player than Lillian could ever hope to become.

Intent in watching the bit of drama that was going on so near to her, poor Jane had already

put two and two together. Olive's exclamation had told her much. Her own eyes had told her even more. She now understood only too well the meaning of Marian's hateful smile. It was she who had planned the whole affair, with a view to belittling the girl she disliked and turning her hard-earned happiness into humiliation.

Jane was seized with a mighty impulse to dash over to where her smiling enemy stood and pour forth a torrent of bitter denunciation. She made a sudden step forward, brows drawn, hands clenched at her sides. Then she halted abruptly. It flashed across her that this was precisely what Marian was hoping she would do. Knowing that Jane possessed a high temper, she had calculated on a display of verbal fireworks that would merely serve to make this "wild, woolly cowgirl" supremely ridiculous.

Jane privately thanked her stars that she had divined Marian's despicable motive in time. She would show these petty plotters that she could rise above them. Like magic the disfiguring frown vanished from her forehead. She greeted the approaching Barbara with a particularly bright smile. "I understand," she nodded pleasantly. "Miss Barrows has come back to the team. I'd love to play, but it seems I'm not needed."

"It's a burning shame," burst forth Barbara in low, vehement tones. "I'm *so* angry."

"Never mind, Barbara." The eyes of the two met in an understanding glance. "Even if I can't play to-day, I'm going to stay here and watch the game. But, if you love me, tell Dorothy Martin to blow that whistle."

"You're a positive angel, Jane Allen." Barbara caught Jane's hand in hers. Turning, she ran back to Dorothy, while Jane walked calmly off the field of conquest to take her place among the spectators, feeling that if she had lost a great deal of pleasure, she had for once, at least, ruled her own rebellious spirit.

CHAPTER XX

A QUESTION OF HONOR

"I CAN'T help saying it. I'm almost sorry we won!" was Judith Stearns' passionate exclamation. "I'll never forgive that tricky Marian Seaton for this afternoon's work!"

The practice game to which Jane Allen had so eagerly looked forward, only to meet with black disappointment, was over. The freshman team had not won an easy victory. Four of the five girls on the practice squad had been distinctly out of sorts when the game began. Displeasure had added unusual snap to their playing. In the short time that Jane had worked with them she had ably demonstrated her superiority as a player over Lillian Barrows. From the first day of practice Lillian had been the weak spot on the team. Luck had been with her at the try-out and she had made a good showing. Afterward she had not played up to it. From

the start, Jane had completely outstripped her. With the good of the team at heart, the other members of the squad could not bring themselves to feel sorry that Jane had replaced her.

They had entered the gymnasium that afternoon with high hopes of beating the regular team, and Lillian's return to her own was both unexpected and unwelcome. Quite correctly they placed the major share of the blame on Marian Seaton's shoulders, and anger against her petty spitefulness inspired them to play as they had never played before. At the end of the game the score stood 22-20 in favor of the regular team, and it was wrathfully conceded among the four that they had not done so badly after all.

Lillian had gained nothing by taking Marian's advice. In reality she had been in anything but fit condition to keep up with the fast playing of the others. She left the floor, dizzy and shaken. Yet she dared not utter a word of complaint for fear of bringing down upon herself the storm of criticism she knew she deserved.

The four players on the practice team, however, were not the only ones with a grievance. Judith, Adrienne and Christine Ellis were equally incensed. The moment the game ended they made a concerted rush for the spot where

they had last seen Jane standing, only to find that she had disappeared. She had waited just long enough to hear the winners announced, then hurried to the dressing room for her raincoat and made a quick exit through a side door. She felt that she could not remain to wait for even Judith and Adrienne. She had borne up bravely in the face of disaster, but she was in no mood for the sympathy of even her best friends.

Nevertheless she had that sympathy to the utmost, as was plainly testified by Judith's vehement declaration, made as she and Adrienne hurried across the campus in the direction of Madison Hall. Judith's usually calm features were dark with righteous wrath, while Adrienne's black eyes snapped belligerence.

"It is the great shame!" she sputtered. "Some time I shall take the grand revenge upon this most hateful Miss Seaton."

In spite of her vexation Judith was obliged to laugh at this threat. She had a sudden vision of tiny Adrienne faring forth in the role of avenger.

"Oh, you laugh now! But wait a little. I shall not forget. Nor will you. Jane is of us both the dear friend."

"Of course she is." Judith grew instantly

grave. "I wish she were on our team. To tell you the truth, I came very near to resigning after the game to-day."

"I had the same thought," confessed Adrienne. "It would be of small use. We should please too greatly Miss Seaton and Miss Reynolds."

"That is precisely the reason I didn't resign," nodded Judith. "We ought to do something to cheer Jane up. Supose we invite her to Rutherford Inn for dinner this evening."

"We might also invite the others who attended our stunt party," proposed Adrienne.

"That's a brilliant idea," lauded Judith. "You go on to the Hall and invite Jane, Ethel and Mary. Poor Norma won't be able to go. She will have to be on duty." Judith sighed. "I do wish we could find some other way for Norma to earn her education. She is a regular slave. I don't see how she finds time to study her lessons."

"Perhaps the way may yet be found." Adrienne rolled her black eyes in a fashion that hinted of mystery. Since the evening of the stunt party she had been busy considering Norma's case and her active mind had already suggested a remedy.

Absorbed in the thought of Jane and her wrongs, Judith had failed to note the significance

of Adrienne's remark. As the little girl was not ready to unfold her plan, even to her intimate friends, she was quite content to find that Judith had attached no special importance to her utterance.

"I'll go back across the campus to Argyle Hall," decided Judith. "While I'm inviting Barbara and Christine, you can invite the others. I'll meet you at the Inn within the next half-hour. I hope Barbara and Christine have no other engagements. Good-bye. I'll see you later."

Judith wheeled and set off briskly in the opposite direction, while Adrienne sped toward the Hall on light, impatient feet. She was longing to comfort the abused Jane and extend her invitation of good cheer.

Alone in the one spot of sanctuary which Wellington afforded her, Jane stood in sore need of the kindly offices of her friends. Wholly intent on her errand of consolation, Adrienne did not stop to knock. She turned the knob and pranced into the room, to find Jane pacing the floor in her old restless fashion, her head bowed, her fine face clouded with resentful suffering. She raised her head as Adrienne entered, then muttered: "Please go away. I wish to be alone."

"Ah, but that you shall not be." Adrienne was not dismayed by this ungracious reception. She advanced boldly upon Jane and encircled her with affectionate arms. "Are we not, then, the sworn friends? It is I who should now be with you. You were brave this afternoon, *cherie;* so brave. To the brave belongs the worship. See, I kneel to you." Adrienne dropped to her knees and lifted her black eyes to the frowning face above her with such an exaggerated air of sympathy that Jane was forced to smile.

"You are a ridiculous child," she said, the smile deepening. "You know only too well that I can't resist such a display of devotion."

"Oh, see! She smiles." Adrienne sprang to her feet, well pleased with the success of her maneuver. "Now all is well. I have come to invite you to the great feast at the Rutherford Inn. All those from whom you have the friendship will be there. Make haste to become ready. I shall go now to find Mary and Ethel. We will return for you in a short time. Only poor Norma cannot be with us. Think how much more we have than *la pauvre petite,* for which to give thanks."

Adrienne flashed from the room as suddenly as she had appeared. She had left behind her

food for thought, however. Even in her hour of bitterness the contrast between her own affluent circumstances and Norma's bleak poverty struck Jane sharply. What she had endured in humiliation in one afternoon, poor Norma was forced to endure continually. For the first time in her short life Jane realized the pettiness of her own misfortunes as compared to Norma's infinitely greater ills. Yet Norma never whimpered. She bore her hurts uncomplainingly and with serene fortitude.

Jane walked to the mirror and surveyed herself with open scorn. "*You* are a coward," she accused, indexing a contemptuous finger at her reflection. "I'm ashamed of you, Jane Allen. But you are going to take that frown off your face and smile. Do you hear me? I said *smile*." The reflection obligingly obeyed her command. "Now hurry," she ordered, "and get yourself dressed for the feast."

Luckily for Adrienne, she found Ethel and Mary in their rooms. They were only too willing to dine outside the Hall. Dispatching Ethel to inform Mrs. Weatherbee that the dining room would be minus the presence of the five girls that evening, Adrienne hurried out of her bloomer suit and into a frock suitable to the occasion.

Once re-attired she did not forget Norma. Flitting downstairs to the dining room, she beckoned the latter to the door and delivered the invitation she knew could not be accepted. But she carried away with her Norma's happy smile, born of the knowledge that she had not been left out of the fun.

Half an hour later the three girls knocked at Jane's door. A serene young woman in a soft brown silk gown that brought out the ruddy lights in her curly hair, graciously admitted them. Jane had forced all signs of disappointment from her face. These girls had come in the name of fellowship. It behooved her to show her appreciation of them.

Ethel and Mary had each determined in her own mind to offer Jane sympathy for the unfair treatment she had received at Marian Seaton's hands. Her calm, self-possessed manner advised them not to open the subject. As the quartette swung across the campus, a stiff November wind in their faces, they chatted volubly about everything save basket-ball. For the time, at least, it was a tabooed topic of conversation.

"My, but you girls are laggers," greeted Christine Ellis, as the four joined Barbara, Christine and Judith, who were seated at a round table at

the far end of the trysting place. "We have been here at least five minutes."

"Sit here, Jane," dictated Judith. "You are to be the guest of honor to-night."

Jane flushed at this announcement. "Girls," she said in clear, direct tones, as she took the place Judith had assigned to her, "I wish to thank every one of you for your loyalty. You can't possibly know how much it means to me after what happened this afternoon. I know you are anxious to talk about it, and I wish you would. It won't hurt my feelings."

"Jane Allen, you're a perfect gentleman!" exclaimed Barbara, stretching a slim hand across the table. "You were simply splendid this afternoon, and we were all furious because you were so badly treated."

"I felt like walking straight up to that Miss Hurley and resigning from the team," said Christine Ellis. "So did Judith and Adrienne. Dorothy was dreadfully vexed, too. It was a shame."

Jane saw the circle of sympathetic faces through a blur of unbidden tears. Though she knew their loyalty, the spoken admission of it brought the impulse to cry.

"I felt like taking Lillian Barrows by the

shoulders and marching her off the floor," put in Barbara indignantly. "The idea of her allowing Marian Seaton even to suggest such a thing to her is past my comprehension. She didn't gain much by it. She looked ready to drop when the game was over."

"I was disappointed, naturally." Jane had regained her self control. "Nevertheless, she had the best right to play. I'm sorry not to be on the practice team any more. Still, I understood when I began to work with you that it was only for a short time."

"You *may* be on the practice team *all* the time," emphasized Barbara. "I am going to make a complaint about Lillian's playing to Miss Hurley. She's the senior manager of the basketball teams. Lillian can't work fast enough for our team. As captain, I've the right to demand that Jane shall replace her."

Jane regarded Barbara with wondering eyes. She had not dreamed of this. To thus oust Lillian from the team would indeed be a royal recompense for all she had suffered. How angry Marian Seaton would be. Jane honestly knew herself to be a better player than Lillian. She had watched the latter sharply during the game and had easily recognized her inability to keep

up with her teammates. Lillian deserved the humiliation. She had chosen to come back to the team at the last moment, not because she really desired to play, but to help Marian consummate a spiteful revenge. Now, thanks to Barbara, the tables would be turned.

"Go ahead and do it, Barbara," urged Christine. "Nothing would please me better. It will teach Lillian Barrows a much-needed lesson in honor, and show Marian Seaton that we can strike back."

"It will indeed be the grand revenge!" Adrienne spoke with an enthusiastic roll of "r." "Will it not then be a happiness to you, Jane, to thus replace the dishonorable one?"

Jane did not reply. Somehow the words "revenge" and "dishonorable" jarred upon her inner self. Now that the opportunity to retaliate had come she was strangely disinclined to seize it. Barbara's proposal was absolutely aboveboard, yet it seemed an inglorious means to the end. Jane's was a nature too great for petty retaliation. She preferred to win her way to whatever she desired rather than receive it at the expense of another, no matter how ignoble that other might be. Still, if she refused to allow Barbara to interfere in her behalf, she ran the

risk of incurring her friend's lively displeasure. Barbara had evidently taken it for granted that Jane would fall in with her plan.

"What makes you look so serious, Jane?" An impatient pucker appeared on Barbara's smooth forehead. "What I propose to do is perfectly fair. You needn't worry about what others may say or think." She had divined that some sort of conflict was going on behind Jane's solemn face.

"I'm not worrying about what may be said or thought of me," began Jane slowly. She paused as though trying to determine how she might best speak without giving offense. "It's only that—well, I'd not care to go on the team in that way. Please don't think me ungrateful. I know you are all my friends. I never believed, until I came to know you, that girls' friendships meant much. I was entirely wrong about that. You've proved yourselves more than loyal. If Miss Barrows couldn't play any more on the team, on account of illness, then it would be different. But for her to be asked to resign, just on my account——" Jane colored painfully. Her eyes strayed in mute appeal about the circle of tense faces as though seeking confirmation of her motive in declining Barbara's well-meant offices.

A brief moment of silence ensued. It was broken by Christine Ellis. "Jane is right," she staunchly defended. "Were I in her place I hope I'd have the courage to say just what she has said. Shake hands, Jane. You are true blue."

" 'Them's' my sentiments," Judith beamed affectionately upon the now astounded Jane, who had dared criticism in order to remain true to herself. Secretly Judith had not favored Barbara's plan. It savored too much of fighting fire with fire.

"I hope you aren't angry with me, Barbara." Jane regarded the other girl with anxiously pleading eyes. Barbara's lips had been set rather forbiddingly while she listened to Jane's unexpected declaration.

"No; I'm not angry." The compressed lips curved into a smile that betokened growing admiration. "I *am* disappointed. We need you on the team, Jane. Perhaps it wasn't fair in me to plan to get you there by dropping Lillian. Still, if she doesn't play faster than she played to-day, someone will have to take her place."

"But she was ill to-day," reminded Jane gently. "Another day she may be quite up to the mark."

"I doubt it," retorted Barbara with a professional air. "However, just to please you, I'll give her a fair trial. If she fails to keep up, then——" Barbara's shoulders shrugged an eloquent ending to her unfinished comment.

"Has it occurred to any of you that we haven't ordered dinner yet?" broke in Mary Ashton plaintively. "That poor waitress over there has circled this table half a dozen times. Now she's leaning against the wall looking unutterable things at us. Let's order our 'eats,' then we can go on lauding Jane with clear consciences." Mary's good-humored grin indicated that her last remark contained no sting.

The rights of the justly incensed waitress were tardily acknowledged and she departed kitchenward with the order, there to express her candid opinion of college girls behind swinging doors.

"What are you girls going to do during the Thanksgiving holidays?" inquired Jane. She was eminently desirous of turning the talk away from basket-ball. She did not propose to be further lauded.

"Only four stingy little days," pouted Mary Ashton. "That means none of us can go very far from Wellington."

This disgruntled reminder set in motion an

enumeration of the ways and means that might be employed to extract fun from the brief vacation. No one of the seven lived near enough to Wellington to dream of spending Thanksgiving at home. Before the feast was over, however, they had managed to lay out a programme of enjoyment which amply proved that resource plus the zest for pleasure could accomplish wonders in the way of Thanksgiving entertainment.

It was half-past eight when the feast ended with three subdued cheers for the guest of honor. Jane was in a maze of bewildered delight as she set off across the campus, with Barbara and Christine clinging to either arm. Her sudden rise to popularity astounded her. The ending of a dark day had brought a perfect night. She felt curiously humble, rather than proud, in the midst of her good fortune. She did not know that she had at last laid the cornerstone upon which was to be erected, little by little, a glorious structure that would mark her as a shining example to those who came after. She regarded herself only as a pioneer who had that day cleared away one more obstacle from her difficult bit of college land.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

TO the students of Wellington College the brief Thanksgiving holiday slipped by like magic. Those who were fortunate enough to have friends or families within visiting distance departed jubilantly to partake of Thanksgiving cheer and returned grumbling over the shortness of the vacation. The majority of the Wellington girls, however, spent the four days within college bounds and made the most of them. Aside from being requested to attend an unusually impressive service in the chapel on Thanksgiving morning, no special restrictions were placed upon the students. Due to a generous inpouring of holiday boxes of good things, feasting was an important feature in the campus houses and a perceptible falling off in numbers ensued at meal time. Lavish hospitality was in order until the last delectable morsel

had vanished and the feasters were obliged to return to regular fare with sighs of heartfelt regret.

Jane was the recipient of an especially bountiful offering which Mr. Allen had thoughtfully ordered sent to her from New York. She was therefore able to dispense largesse long after the dainties that had fallen to her friends had been consumed. Nevertheless she had been the victim of more than one spell of homesick longing for El Capitan. It was her first holiday away from the ranch and not even the gay little social sessions which she and her friends held in their various rooms or at the Inn could quite make up for the past glories of that particular day as she had been wont to spend it in her far Western home. The only reminder of it was Firefly, and to him she gave all her spare moments. Not for one day out of the four was he neglected. The season had been unusually mild and those last November days were ideal for horseback riding. Jane reveled in the long gallops she took in the crisp, sunlit weather, and rejoiced in the fact that this much of her old life was still left to her.

Firefly was equally elated at receiving so much attention. To garner daily, delectable lumps of sugar and luscious apples, along with lavish pet-

ting, then to be allowed to exercise his restless little feet in long runs over the hills and far away, exactly coincided with whatever ideas he may have entertained of horse Heaven. He whinnied with pure delight whenever Jane appeared in his stall and made such ardent demonstration of appreciation that she reproached herself for past lapses. She vowed that in future she would visit him every day, if only for a few minutes, and promised him with many pats that she would take him out for the good of his health whenever she could spare the time.

The morning following the last day of vacation broke in a heavy downpour of rain. It continued to fall unceasingly, washing away all traces of the light snow that had whitened the campus the preceding day. True to her promise, Jane braved the storm to visit Firefly, affectionately assuring him of her good intentions.

Unmindful of her dripping raincoat and unruly umbrella, which threatened to turn inside out with each fresh attack of the rapidly rising wind, she plodded back to the Hall in a most serene state of mind. She was beginning to experience a strange, unbidden pride in Wellington; a kind of proprietary interest. It thrilled her to feel herself a part of so great an institu-

tion of learning. How much she would have of good to tell her father, when she went home for Christmas. How glad he would be to know that she had really accepted college and was learning to love it.

Absorbed in these pleasant reflections, Jane mechanically shook the water from her umbrella and entered the vestibule of the Hall. Her hand on the knob of the inner door, she discovered that it was locked. As this frequently occurred, she placidly rang the bell and awaited admittance.

"Mrs. Weatherbee wishes to see you, Miss Allen," announced the maid who admitted her. "I knocked on your door, but no one answered."

"Where is she?" questioned Jane, frowning. She could only speculate regarding the nature of that estimable person's business with her.

"She's in her office."

Jane stalked down the hall without further words. Pausing in the open door of the tiny cubby-hole which Mrs. Weatherbee dignified with the name of office, Jane coldly addressed the white-haired woman at the desk. "You wished to see me, Mrs. Weatherbee?"

The matron swung about in her chair, her florid face alive with censure. "I sent for you, Miss Allen, to inform you that I have re-

ceived several complaints regarding the noise that goes on continually every evening in your room. While I have no objection to my girls entertaining their friends, I cannot allow any one of them to annoy those who are engaged in preparing their lessons."

"I was not aware that we had *annoyed* anyone." Jane's old belligerence came to the front with a bound. "Will you kindly tell me whom we have disturbed?"

"That is neither here nor there," came the acid retort. "I do not consider it necessary to go into detail. The fact that you have annoyed others and that it must be instantly stopped is the point I wish to bring forward to your notice."

A maddening smile played about Jane's lips. "I think I understand," she said with scornful sweetness. "Thank you, Mrs. Weatherbee, for calling my attention to the matter. In future Miss Stearns and I will try not to offend. I shall appreciate it if you will kindly exact the same pledge from Miss Seaton and Miss Gilbert."

Jane turned and walked down the hall toward the stairs. She half expected Mrs. Weatherbee would call her back. The summons did not come.

Mrs. Weatherbee was struggling in the throes of angry amazement. Jane had hit the mark altogether too squarely to suit her. She longed to call back this high-handed rebel who had all but accused her of favoritism and put her in her place. This was the second time she had seized upon an opportunity to vent her personal dislike of Jane in an impersonal manner. On both occasions she had been worsted. Deep in her heart she knew Jane had not failed to attribute her rebuke to its true source. In the face of the girl's shrewd retort, discretion prompted her not to continue the argument. Jane was quite likely to accuse her of interfering on the grounds of personal dislike. But on one point she was fully determined, Jane Allen should not pass her sophomore year in Madison Hall.

The disagreeable scene drove Jane's peaceful humor far afield. Once in her room she thrashed stormily about, stirring up a little tempest of her own.

"What on earth is the matter?" Judith Stearns entered just in time to see Jane's brown walking hat sail madly through the air to land in one corner with a flop; her umbrella whizzed helplessly after it. "It looks like a clear case of tempest without; tempest within."

"I'm so furious with that miserable woman." Jane eyed Judith savagely. "She hates me and I hate her!" She burst into an angry recital of Mrs. Weatherbee's recent arraignment.

"Hm!" Judith raised significant brows. "Our dear Marian has been busy again. Much good it will do her. Still, I don't like it. I wish she'd let you alone."

"I'm not afraid of her." Jane's lips curled in scorn.

"Of course you aren't. Yet it isn't pleasant to have her always stirring up trouble. One never knows when she may step in and create a wholesale disturbance. 'Great oaks from little acorns grow,' you know. You must be on your guard, Jane. I understand she is simply furious with all of us for standing up for you. That reminds me. Lillian Barrows went to her home in New York City for Thanksgiving and she isn't coming back. I was speeding joyfully along to tell you, but your indoor cyclone upset my laudable intentions."

" 'Isn't coming back,' " repeated Jane, amazement and joy blended in her utterance.

"No; she had a relapse the day after the game and her doctor says she can't come back to col-

lege this year. Of course you know what that means."

"Yes." Jane drew a long breath. "I am truly sorry for her. I didn't blame her so much for that—about basket-ball, I mean. I'm glad I can play in the team, though."

"So are we all," caroled Judith happily. "Oh, yes. I've another piece of news which isn't so nice. Our Christmas holidays are to be cut down to twelve days. It's outrageous. We always had three weeks at Morrison."

"What!" Jane sat down heavily in a nearby chair. "Oh, it can't be true! Who told you, Judy?"

"It's on the bulletin board. I saw it this afternoon. The girls are making a great deal of fuss about it. Those who live very far away can't go home. Why, Jane, I forgot. *You* can't possibly go home, can you?" Judith became instantly sympathetic. "That's too bad. Why can't you spend the holidays with me? I'll write to my aunt in New York that I'm going to bring you. I expect to spend Christmas with her."

"Thank you, Judy," Jane was frowning hard to keep back her tears, "but I can't accept your invitation. If I can't go home, I don't wish to

go anywhere else. I shall see Miss Howard and ask for a special leave of absence."

"You won't be able to get it." Judith shook her head. "Some of the girls have tried already and have been refused."

"I shall ask her, just the same," was Jane's stubborn response.

But the next day merely brought her an uncompromising refusal of her request. "I am sorry, especially sorry in your case," was Miss Howard's sympathetic reply, "but President Blakesly has decreed that we are to make no exceptions to the rule." Jane left her office with the conviction that first impressions were invariably correct, and that she now hated college more than ever. She had always hated it. She had merely tried to deceive herself for a time, but now she again saw clearly.

As the days glided by and the Christmas holidays drew nearer, she descended deeper into the Slough of Despond. Even basket-ball could not wholly revive her drooping spirits. She played with her usual dash and spirit, for the sake of pride, but her heart was not in it. On the second Saturday in December the great game came off between the freshman and sophomore teams. Jane watched the freshmen defeat the sopho-

mores, too full of her own trouble to care much which side won. She was glad, of course, for the sake of her three friends, but she was still immersed in her own sorrows and therefore not enthusiastic. It was only the first game in a series of three. She provoked Judith, who was pluming herself over the victory, by pointing out that the sophomores might win the other two games yet to be played. The pennant was still far from being won. Had Judith not fully realized how bitterly her roommate was suffering, she would have been decidedly piqued by Jane's pessimism.

Now that her plans had gone so completely awry, it was a difficult matter for poor Jane to interest herself in the business of Christmas giving. She made a list of names of those she wished to remember and ransacked the few shops of which Chesterford boasted for suitable gifts. But in them she saw little that was worthy of consideration. She had plenty of money to spend and was prepared to buy with reckless disregard for expense, but nothing appealed to her as good enough for her dear ones at El Capitan and her few friends at Wellington.

She finally solved the problem by applying to Miss Howard for a short leave of absence.

Knowing the girl's bitterness of heart over her changed holiday prospect, Miss Howard reluctantly granted her request after obtaining President Blakesly's consent. She enjoined her to tell no one of her proposed trip. "I am doing this as a special favor to you, my dear. Were it to become known I should be besieged with similar requests. As it happens, no one has ventured to apply for a like permission, and as President Blakesly has given his consent I can allow you to go with a clear conscience," were the kind-hearted registrar's words. So Jane had calmly written a note to Mrs. Weatherbee stating that she would be absent from the Hall from Friday morning until Saturday evening, and slipping quietly from the house had departed for New York City. Not even to Judith did she reveal her intention, although her affection for her roommate prompted her to leave a little note in which she stated that she would be away until Saturday.

Having never before set foot in the famous metropolis, Jane found herself somewhat bewildered by its intricacies. Many inquiries, accompanied by lavish gratuities, made her progress comparatively easy. She sheltered at an exclusive hostelry, the address of which Miss Howard

had given her at her solicitation, which was justly famed for its special accommodations for women, and furnished feminine guides of education and refinement to those who desired their services. Jane had the good luck to secure the attendance of a delightful woman of middle age, forced by reverses in fortune to make her own living, and the two found much in common.

Only one thing occurred to disturb her. While at luncheon with her chaperon in a fashionable tearoom, she became aware that a florid-faced woman was regarding her out of curiously unamiable pale-blue eyes. Jane experienced an uncomfortable sense of having seen her before, but could not recall her identity. She quickly looked away and afterward forgot the incident. It was not until she was on the train for Wellington that recollection dawned. Now she knew to whom those cold blue eyes belonged. The florid-faced person was Marian Seaton's mother. Jane entertained as small regard for Mrs. Seaton as she did for her daughter. She therefore dismissed the incident with a shrug.

With the downfall of her hopes, Jane's first thought had been to telegraph the bad news to her father. A distinctly mournful letter had followed the telegram. In it, however, lurked no

hint of her renewed hatred of college. As a fighting pioneer, Jane had resolved to keep that hatred locked within her own breast. There was at least a grain of comfort to be had in the gifts she had chosen for those she loved. While in New York she had purchased a steamer trunk in which to convey them safely to Wellington. She had thoughtfully decided on this method as the least likely to attract the attention of the Madison Hall contingent. The arrival of a trunk would not be noticed, whereas if she returned to the Hall laden with the spoils of her shopping, comment was sure to run rife. She had promised Miss Howard that no one should learn of the registrar's leniency and she proposed to keep her word.

Judith Stearns alone had a shrewd suspicion of where Jane had gone, but she also preserved discreet silence on the subject. She met the several inquiries as to her roommate's whereabouts with the vague information that Jane had been obliged to go away on business, and with that indefinite information they were forced to be content.

"How do you like New York?" was her smiling comment, when Jane walked into their room at a little after four o'clock on Saturday after-

noon. "I cut my last class on purpose to welcome the wanderer home."

"How did you know I went to New York?" Jane voiced her astonishment. "Only one person could have told you."

"No one told me. I put two and two together. I see that four is really the correct result." Judith's smile widened.

"Yes, I *was* there." Jane appeared relieved at her roommate's explanation. "You did not say so to anyone else, did you, Judy? Miss Howard made me promise to keep it a secret. I wouldn't have told you if you hadn't guessed it."

"No; I was mum as an oyster. I had an inkling that she gave you permission. You'd better keep it dark. Marian Seaton, Maizie Gilbert and Alicia Reynolds planned to do the same thing. They were the original mad hatters when Miss Howard said 'no.' It seems that Marian's mother is in New York. Marian had planned to meet her and asked to leave here five days ahead of vacation."

"I saw her mother there." Jane looked startled. "She was in a tearoom where I had luncheon. She stared hard at me, but I don't think she remembered me. I couldn't recall who she was until after I had boarded the train for

Wellington. If she knew me, do you suppose she'd write Marian about seeing me?"

"Hardly. She is probably too busy with Christmas plans to think of it again. If she should, Marian would raise a fuss about it. I wouldn't worry over it, though. Tell me about what you bought and where the products of your shopping are. You haven't any excess baggage that I can see."

Jane entered into a vivid account of her trip, promising to show Judith her purchases as soon as they arrived. Once or twice a thought of the Seatons crossed her mind. She wondered if it would not be wise to go to Miss Howard and tell her of the tearoom incident. She deemed it unnecessary, however. There was only one chance in a thousand that anything would come of it.

During the next three days the pleasant flutter of Christmas preparations drove the affair from her mind. College was scheduled to close on Wednesday, as Christmas day fell on Friday. On Tuesday evening Barbara Temple entertained the girls who had composed the stunt party in her room at Argyle Hall. The eight young women spent a happy session together, exchanging gifts and expressions of good will.

Norma Bennett was perhaps the happiest of them all. Added to the fact that never before in her life had she received so many presents was the blessed knowledge that she was to accompany Adrienne to New York to spend the holidays with the Duprees. Mrs. Weatherbee had strongly opposed her going on the ground of needing her help, but Adrienne had haunted her like a small, persistent gad-fly until she gave chilly consent. Tiny Adrienne had a purpose of her own in thus carrying Norma off, which she had confided to no one. She had begged Jane to go with them, but the latter, having been denied the one thing she craved, had no heart for visiting even the fascinating Dupree family. If the weather were good she would spend the most of Christmas day on Firefly's back, then eat a lonely dinner at the Inn. Madison Hall without her few particular friends was a place to shun rather than abide in.

Wednesday morning brought her numerous express packages from home, along with a little sheaf of letters, two of which were respectively from her father and aunt. Judith had already left the Hall for chapel, but Jane lingered to read her letters. Her father's message of sympathy and cheer furnished her with untold consolation. His affectionate lines, "Never mind,

girl of mine, the winter will soon slip away. You'll be back at Capitan before you know it, and then Dad will make it all up to you. You can't possibly miss us as much as we miss you, but the great day of reunion is hurrying along, so brace up. You are a real pioneer, every inch of you, and I'm proud of my brave Jane."

Her Aunt Mary's letter was equally tender and hopeful. Jane smiled through her tears as she laid it aside to pick up the next on the pile. This proved to be a note from Dorothy Martin. It read:

"DEAR JANE:

"I can't possibly go home for the holidays feeling happy without wishing you a Merry Christmas. I was so sorry to hear that you could not go home, too. I have been so pleased to see you daily showing yourself an intrepid pioneer. You were simply splendid that day in the gymnasium and I honor you for the dignified way in which you bore your cross. When I come back to Wellington I should like to have a long talk with you. I cannot but believe that our misunderstanding may be cleared away if we attack it heart and soul. With love and best wishes,

"Your friend,

"DOROTHY MARTIN."

Jane's eyes filled afresh as she read the earnest lines. They bristled with sincerity. She had sworn never to forgive Dorothy. Now, facing the blessed anniversary of the birth of Him who counseled forgiveness not once but seventy times seven times, she felt her animosity crumble. Who was she that she dared brush aside that divine counsel? As she re-read Dorothy's note the sound of chiming bells was borne to her ears. She listened, then remembered. It was the Christmas call to chapel. Following a pretty custom of Wellington, Christmas hymns were always rung on the chimes on the last morning service before the departure of the students.

"Oh, come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
Oh, come ye—oh, come ye to Bethlehem!"

pealed forth the bells. Jane heard them, her heart swelling with reverent rapture. "Peace on earth, good will toward men," she murmured. Up from the ashes of her disappointment soared the glorious thought that, though a continent stretched between herself and those she loved, she had come into an understanding of Christmas which she had never known before.

CHAPTER XXII

JUDITH SPEAKS HER MIND

"HERE'S a letter for you, Jane. If I'm not greatly mistaken, the handwriting on the envelope is Miss Howard's."

"A letter for *me?*" Jane looked up casually from her book as Judith entered. A faint shade of alarm crossed her face as she took the envelope and hastily tore it open. She knew of only one reason why the registrar should write her. The note was short. Its very brevity was suspicious.

"My Dear Miss Allen:

"Will you kindly call at my office on Wednesday afternoon at half-past four o'clock. I shall expect to see you promptly at this hour.

"Yours sincerely,

"Caroline Saxe Howard."

"Read that." Jane handed the note to Judith, who quickly glanced it over.

"Do you suppose——" began Judith.

"I am quite sure that Marian Seaton has been busy," interrupted Jane harshly. "Am I never to be free from the spite of that girl?" Jane threw up her hands with a gesture of angry despair and springing from her chair began to pace the floor in her caged-lion fashion.

"You look like an offended tragedy queen," giggled Judith. "I don't blame you for being cross, though." The laughter went out of her merry blue eyes. "If what we suspect is true, it puts you in a horrid position. Of course you can explain. Still it's not pleasant to be under a cloud even for a day."

"It's contemptible in her," muttered Jane. "I suppose her mother recognized me and mentioned seeing me. But what do you suppose Marian Seaton has said to Miss Howard?"

"That is hard to tell," was Judith's dubious rejoinder.

"Exactly," emphasized Jane. "If she has not told the truth, then I shall have to contradict her statement or else say nothing."

"Surely you wouldn't be so foolish as to allow her to put you in the wrong," argued Judith. "If

she has been untruthful, she deserves to be exposed."

"That is just the point," cut in Jane impatiently. "I despise her trickery, but I hate even more to tell tales. It has never been my father's way, nor mine."

Judith viewed this side of the argument with unbounded interest. She had her own code of honor and eminently tried to live up to it. Still she had never drawn the line so sharply as had Jane. Deliberately set upon, she would turn and deal blow for blow. It was a matter of deep curiosity that, when maligned, Jane, the belligerent, seemed incapable of retaliation.

"You are a queer girl, Jane Allen," she said meditatively. "You rage like a lion at the mean things that are done to you, but you never strike back. I know that you aren't a coward. It has just occurred to me that the reason you don't is because you are greater in spirit than the rest of us."

"Nonsense!" Jane reddened at the compliment. "It's all on account of my father that I feel as I do about certain things. I've been brought up on a ranch. Among ranchmen it's a point of honor to keep what they call 'a still tongue in your head.' Take the boys on El

Capitan, for instance. They'd never think of telling tales in order to 'square' themselves. Unless it is something very serious, Dad makes them settle their own difficulties without any help from him. You see I've always lived in a man's world. Can you wonder that I don't care much for this world of girls that I'm now forced to live in?"

"But you do like your little pal, Judy, don't you?" Judith's question was tinged with wistful anxiety. Her growing affection for Jane prompted her to speak thus.

"You know I do. I owe every happiness I've had here at Wellington to you. I don't believe I could ever have endured college if I had been obliged to room with someone else."

"It is sweet in you to say that." It was Judith who now blushed her gratification. "I can't help thinking of what you said about not telling tales. I'm going to try to live up to it, too. I hope when you go to see Miss Howard you may find that she sent for you for another reason. Perhaps we have been running out to meet calamity."

"Perhaps." Jane's reply was not optimistic. She had a premonition of impending catastrophe that would not be stilled.

On entering the registrar's office the following afternoon, she knew that her premonition had not been an idle one. Miss Howard's unsmiling features presaged trouble. Her cold salutation was further proof.

"Miss Allen," she began stiffly, "in giving you permission to go to New York City I made a serious mistake. Kindly read this."

"This" proved to be a letter from the irate Mrs. Seaton, in which she roundly censured the registrar for refusing to grant her daughter an earlier leave of absence. She flatly accused Miss Howard of partiality, citing Jane's case as a flagrant example. She continued to lay down the law for a matter of three pages and ended by signing herself, "With deep indignation."

Jane read the letter and handed it back without comment. Her gray eyes were stormy, however, and her famous frown was most conspicuous. For a long moment woman and girl stared at each other in silence.

"Can you explain to me how this happened?" It was Miss Howard who broke the uncomfortable stillness that had followed. "Miss Seaton's letter places me in a most trying position. President Blakesly will also be deeply annoyed. I assured him that you could be trusted to be silent.

He rarely grants a request of this nature unless in a case of illness or death."

"I did not break my word." Jane's head was haughtily erect. "I understand your position. I am very sorry, but I think the explanation should come from Miss Seaton. I have nothing to say."

"I have already talked with Miss Seaton. She has refused to tell me the source of her information. As she lives at Madison Hall I can only surmise from whom that information came." Miss Howard's hint was freighted with significance.

"I did not break my word," repeated Jane stubbornly. "I told no one that I was going to New York. When I returned, Miss Stearns guessed that I had been there. She asked me if I had and I was obliged to tell her the truth. She mentioned it to no one."

"Thank you for that information." The sarcasm of the comment was unmistakable. "That will be all, Miss Allen. Good afternoon." She nodded a curt dismissal.

Jane hurried angrily from the office. Cut to the quick at being thus dismissed, she was halfway across the campus before it dawned upon her that in adhering so strictly to her code of honor she had implicated poor Judith. She set

off on a run across the campus to inform her roommate of what had passed. Not until she arrived in her room and found Judith missing did she remember despairingly that Judith had mentioned her intention to drop in on Miss Howard that very afternoon after four o'clock to inquire about a matter relative to her course of study.

Worse yet, Judith had admiringly announced her intention to adopt Jane's tactics of silence. Were Miss Howard to question her, as undoubtedly she would, Judith would keep her vow, greatly to her own detriment. There was but one thing to do. Jane did not fancy the humiliation of returning to the office and renouncing the stand she had taken. Nevertheless she faced about and retraced her steps to Wellington Hall. Judith, the good-natured, should not suffer even a suspicion of blame for what had occurred.

When half-way to Wellington Hall, Jane was rudely jolted from her lofty height of abnegation. A familiar figure in a blue, fur-trimmed coat was descending the steps. She paused for an instant, then swung briskly off in the opposite direction.

"J-u-d-y!" Jane sent her clear call across the snowy campus and hastened toward the blue-clad girl. "Oh, Judith, dear, I'm so sorry!" she

cried as the two met. "I never thought she'd blame you. I was just coming back to tell her."

"I told the whole sad tale!" Judith showed her white teeth in a seraphic smile of vindicated innocence.

"You—told—her!" stammered Jane. "But I thought——"

"So did I," Judith's smile widened, "but it didn't work in this case, Janie. 'Truth crushed to earth *will* rise again.' It rose like a cake of yeast this time."

Jane tried to frown. Instead she burst into a peal of laughter. The next instant the two girls clung to each other, speechless with mirth. That which had started out as tragedy ended in comedy.

"Come on," commanded Judith at last. "If anyone happens along, we are likely to be set down as harmless lunatics."

"What happened?" Jane questioned as they started for the Hall, arm in arm.

"Not so much. Miss Howard looked surprised to see me. She was very frosty, too. You can imagine how I felt when she asked me if I had regaled our dear Marian with a full and pretentious history of your trip to New York. She said that you had admitted telling me, and then

she proceeded to look unutterable suspicion in Judy's direction. I knew you had made up your mind not to say a word, so I added my little two plus two correctly and established my honor and yours in about three minutes. She said that she was glad to know the facts of the case, and that she would write you a note."

"I am glad, too, that it all turned out well," sighed Jane. "I hope Miss Howard won't be criticized for letting me go."

"She won't," was Judith's confident prediction. "Nothing further will be said about it." Judith had a reason of her own for making this bold statement. On returning to their room she left Jane and with lion-like courage marched up the hall to Marian Seaton's door. It was opened by Maizie Gilbert, who looked surprised displeasure at her caller.

"I wish to speak to Miss Seaton," announced Judith with dignity.

Marian came forward as she entered, her pale eyes narrowing with dislike. "You came to see *me?*" she interrogated with cool disdain.

"Yes. I came to tell you that Miss Howard knows all about how your mother happened to recognize Miss Allen in the tearoom in New York. Miss Howard allowed Miss Allen to go

there for a special reason, after receiving President Blakesly's consent to do so. Perhaps she has already told you. What I came here to say, however, is this. As Miss Allen's case was exceptional she was requested to go and return quietly. In a college of this size where a special permission is granted to one student, others who have no knowledge of the circumstances are altogether too ready to accuse the faculty of favoritism." Judith delivered this thrust with malicious intent.

"Will you kindly cut your call short?" Marian's cheeks were aflame with temper. Never courteous, she was now brutally rude. "I have no desire to listen to a further account of Miss Allen's trip to New York."

"Oh, there's nothing more to be said," Judith smiled maddeningly, "except," her smiling lips tightened, "that hereafter you are to be very careful what you say to anyone about Jane Allen. I am her friend. As such I intend to see that she receives fair treatment in all respects. If you try again to injure her by word or deed, I shall put the matter before President Blakesly. I am sure that he would not allow one student to circulate malicious and untrue reports about another. Think it over. Talk it over, if you

like. Just remember, though, that I mean every word I've said."

Turning, Judith stalked from the room without a backward glance, leaving Jane's oppressors to digest her lecture as best they might. Outside the closed door she drew a deep breath of satisfaction. Whether her mission would be productive of good results, time alone would show. At least she had had the exquisite pleasure of speaking her mind.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE UNSEEN LISTENER

JUDITH'S call on Marian Seaton and Maizie Gilbert was attended with at least one good result; Marian promptly dropped her holiday grievance against the registrar. When she had urged her mother to write to Miss Howard, she had entertained the idea that perhaps Jane had slipped away to New York without obtaining official permission. Granted this was the case, exposure would mean trouble for the girl she disliked. An interview with Miss Howard showed the fallacy of this suspicion. Yet the registrar's patent vexation plainly indicated that she had not expected her leniency to be thus noised abroad. Assuming this hypothesis, Marian virtuously refused to divulge the name of her informant, but took care to create the impression that the news had proceeded from Jane's lips.

Her brief acquaintance with Jane on the train had shown her that the reserved Westerner would not submit to being questioned. She had, therefore, shrewdly calculated on thus bringing about a rupture between the registrar and Jane. She had not counted on Judith as a stumbling block.

Marian had not the slightest intention of dropping her persecution of Jane. She had never forgiven her for showing such open contempt for herself, and she had determined to do her utmost to drive her from Wellington. Jane's early unpopularity delighted Marian. Later it galled her to note that, despite her ill-natured gossip and constant treacherous attempts to discredit her, Jane was slowly gathering about her a few staunch friends who were ready and willing to fight for her interests. In the face of this unexpected opposition, Marian was more determined than ever to cut Jane's newly gained ground of friendship from under her feet. It behooved her to be always on the watch, ready to make capital of the smallest incident that chance might throw in her direction.

Although Jane knew nothing of Judith's bold interference in her behalf, she was fully aware of what she might expect in future from Marian Seaton. More than once she had seen the drama

of "Hatred" played on her father's ranch. She had twice seen it enacted amid heavy blows, with bloodshed for a final curtain. Often it had ended in dismissal for one of the two prime movers. On rare occasions it had scorched and shriveled beneath the powerful white light of understanding and from its ashes had sprung friendship. In the brief season she had been at Wellington, she had discovered that girls could hate as fiercely as men. Among them sharp words became deadly bullets, sly innuendo the proverbial stab in the back, while scathing criticism could deal sledge-hammer blows.

Hers was too sturdy a nature to quail before the prospect of what might happen. Thus far, almost every disagreeable experience which had fallen to her lot had been balanced by another of the opposite sort. The mistake over her room had brought her Judith. Adrienne's pledge of friendship had come to her in her darker hours. Lillian Barrows' treachery had aroused the loyalty of her teammates and resulted in placing Jane regularly on the practice team. The friendly note of apology she had received from Miss Howard had wiped out Marian Seaton's attempt to harm her. The wreck of her holiday plans had opened her eyes to the true meaning of Christmas. Dorothy

Martin's supposed disloyalty had been instrumental in giving happiness to poor, neglected Norma.

Best of all, Jane's faith in Dorothy had been fully restored. On the evening of the day on which Judith had risen to her standard, Dorothy had come to her. Judith had discreetly retired from the scene to visit Ethel Lacey. Left alone, the two girls had made short work of the barrier which Jane had raised in the heat of her wrath. When Dorothy had explained that the nature of her conversation with Edith had been defensive rather than offensive, proud Jane had humbly sued for pardon. Then and there the two had vowed that never again would they allow the sun to go down upon their anger. Whatever their differences might be, they would discuss them frankly and settle them speedily.

With the sinister ban of misunderstanding removed, Jane's aversion to meeting Dorothy at table vanished. As Edith Hammond was a young person of many dinner engagements, she was frequently absent from table at the evening meal. On these occasions Adrienne, Jane and Dorothy made merry together. Edith's presence was provocative of restraint. Without her the three enjoyed themselves immensely.

"Is it indeed so that we shall not see the haughty Miss Hammond to-night?" inquired Adrienne artlessly, as the three met at dinner one evening in early January.

"It is indeed so," smiled Dorothy. "Edith has been very busy entertaining and being entertained since she came back to Wellington."

"It is well." Adrienne's animated features betokened small sorrow. "I would that it were always thus."

"You are a naughty child," chided Dorothy playfully. In secret she echoed the little girl's naïve sentiment. Edith had been unusually thorny since her return to college, and Dorothy had lost all patience with her.

"I have the great secret to unfold. It is only for yours and Jane's ears. All has been arranged for *la petite* Norma." Adrienne folded her hands with the calm air of an arbiter of destinies.

"So that is why Norma has been looking so unutterably happy of late! I laid her smiling face to the jolly vacation she spent with you. I had no idea there was more than that behind it. Tell us the secret, dear Imp. We can be trusted. Can't we, Jane?" Dorothy appealed to Jane.

"I am a safe receptacle for secrets." Jane

laughingly held up her right hand in mock oath of her integrity as a secret-keeper.

"You remember when our clever Norma gave the great soliloquy. Ah, then I whispered to myself, 'What of *la petite* as an actress? *Mon père* is the manager who knows many other managers of the profession. Norma shall go to New York with me at Christmas. Then we shall see.'

"When we had been in the city several days and Norma was, we will say, acclimated, I caused her to recite for *mon père* and *ma mère*. They were, of a truth, delighted. So *mon père* took her to the office of a great manager. He also heard her recite and then promised to obtain for her the engagement next summer in a stock company. If she does well she can then earn enough money to pay for her junior year at Wellington. Thus she will not need to carry the tray or work in the kitchen or receive the snubs of some ill-natured students. Have I not done well?" As a child turns to its elders for approval, Adrienne's black eyes searched the faces of her friends.

"You are not the Imp. You are an angel!" Jane's hand reached across the table. "Ever since the night of the freshman dance I have been wondering what I could do for Norma. I knew she wouldn't accept the money that would free

her of this drudgery. She is too proud and self-respecting. But your way is simply splendid."

"I agree with Jane." Dorothy's hand had also gripped Adrienne's slender fingers. "I never even knew that Norma could recite. I've tried to help her in small ways, but this—— Well, I am willing to sit at the feet of my freshman sisters and learn a few things."

Adrienne looked highly pleased with herself, as well she might. "It is not so much," she deprecated. "Norma has the talent; I have the power. *Voila!* It is thus quickly arranged. Here is Norma now. I have told the great secret, *ma petite,*" she hailed, as Norma approached the table.

As Norma stood at least five feet seven inches, the apellation of "little one" was quaintly incongruous. Adrienne frequently used it merely as a term of affection.

Norma flushed to the roots of her brown hair. "It doesn't seem as though it has really happened to me," she said, as though in half-apology for her good fortune. She wondered if Dorothy had any objection to the stage as a means of earning a livelihood. Of Jane she had no doubt.

Dorothy's warm pressure of her hand was in-

finitely reassuring. "You are a lucky girl," she congratulated. "Some day, when you are a great actress, we shall be glad to remember that Wellington was your Alma Mater. I think we ought to celebrate to-night. My roommate is out for the evening. After supper we will invite Ethel and Judith and have a high tea. Then, Norma, you must recite for me."

A sudden imperative summons from an adjoining table sent Norma scurrying about her duty.

"When the next year comes *la petite* will not have to obey the calls and bear away the dishes!" exclaimed Adrienne with deep satisfaction.

"And she will have you to thank for it," reminded Jane. "You are a good fairy who dropped down upon Wellington from a stray moonbeam just to make Norma happy." Jane was thinking of her fanciful comparison made at first sight of Adrienne.

"You are the flatterer who makes me to blush." Adrienne colored prettily. "Let us change the subject and speak of basket-ball."

Basket-ball proved a fruitful topic for discussion. Vacation over, it had again begun to loom prominently on the college horizon. Public opinion leaned toward the sophomores as winners of

the pennant. It was conceded by all but the freshmen themselves that the sophomores were better players. To Adrienne's sturdy declaration that the freshmen would win the two games yet to be played, Dorothy shook her head. "I'm afraid you can't do it," she doubted. "You have one uncertain player in your squad. I won't say her name. You know whom I mean."

Adrienne and Jane knew quite well to whom Dorothy referred. While at practice Jane, in particular, had mentally criticized the work of Alicia Reynolds, and wished a trifle enviously that she might for just once replace her. In the privacy of their room Judith had often complained of Alicia's uncertain playing. At times she held her own. Frequently, however, she made stupid blunders which Marian Seaton tried zealously to retrieve. Jane never commented, even to Judith, on what she saw. She was not sorry to hear her roommate voice what she had already observed, neither was she surprised to hear Dorothy confirm it.

"I wish Miss Hurley would allow Jane to play on the position of Miss Reynolds." Adrienne had no delicate hesitation when it came to mentioning names. "The *madamoiselle* is without doubt the favorite of Miss Hurley. *N'est-ce pas?*"

"That is a leading question. It wouldn't be fair for big sister to answer it."

"It is answered," shrugged Adrienne. Dorothy's twinkling eyes had conveyed more than her lips. "If this Miss Reynolds were some day to tender the resignation, I should not weep."

Jane smiled faintly at this candid statement. The possibility of such a thing happening was remote. She could conceive of nothing short of physical disability that would cause Alicia to resign from the team.

The second in the series of three games played between the sophomores and freshmen was scheduled to take place early in March. January was rapidly winging its way toward the dreaded mid-year examinations. Owing to the approach of this ordeal which would occupy the greater part of the first week in February, it had been sagely decided by the basket-ball committee to allow a considerable interval of practice after the affairs of the new college term had been adjusted.

In spite of the approaching examinations, brisk practice went on betwen the freshman and substitute teams. This was partly due to the fact that the girls of the sophomore squad were devoting more time to study than to practice. Taking advantage of this studious mood, their

opponents were leaving nothing undone that would tend to make them victorious in the coming contest. Whenever they could steal an hour or two after classes they prodded the sub-team on to duty and worked with a will.

As it happened, the subs needed little prodding. One and all they were devoted to the game. They met the call to practice with the utmost willingness and bade fair to outplay the official team itself, so smoothly did they work together. The week preceding the mid-year test, basket-ball activities ceased and a wholesale review set in, to an accompaniment of much midnight oil. Then followed a dread season of question and answer, during which hope and fear commingled. Its end was celebrated by numerous social sessions in the various campus houses, for no student was sorry when that fateful test had passed on to keep company with similar harrowing shades.

The middle of February found the basket-ball enthusiasts again hard at work. Little more than two weeks stood between the freshmen and the coming game. They were now glad of their earlier practice, for the sophomores had awakened to their need to work and frequently claimed the gymnasium. As this was all fair enough they

bore it meekly and, on occasions when the coveted floor was theirs, they endeavored to make up for lost time.

But when Saturday, the fifth of March, came, they tasted the aloes of defeat. A score of 20-12 in favor of the sophomores sent them scurrying to their dressing room on the verge of tears. They had been so sure of themselves. It was hard to credit that, with all their strenuous work, they had been worsted.

For reasons best known to themselves three members of the team were secretly burning with indignation. Judith, Adrienne and Christine knew exactly why defeat had overtaken them. Alicia Reynolds had perpetrated several glaring blunders that had piled up the score of their opponents. If only Jane had been on the team, was the separate resentful thought of each of the three as they silently slipped on their long coats preparatory to leaving the dressing room. The presence in the room of Marian Seaton and the incompetent Alicia alone served to tie their tongues. Marian was looking brazenly defiant as she collected her effects. She knew that trouble was brewing for Alicia. The latter was attempting to follow her companion's example, though she felt more like crying. Noting Alicia's down-

cast air, Marian hurried her into her coat and out of the dressing room. She did not propose that her friend should disgrace herself by crying while in the presence of this unsympathetic trio.

Hustling the drooping Alicia across the gymnasium to where Maizie Gilbert and a number of her particular friends were standing, she left her to their voluble expressions of sympathy and made an excuse to return to the dressing room. She was insatiably curious to know what was being said about herself and Alicia. She was well aware that the latter had played so badly as to jeopardize her position on the team. What she most wished to discover was whether the three girls intended to enter complaint of the fact.

Excited voices within told her that she had been wise to return. Though the door was closed she could hear quite plainly. To avoid giving the effect of listening, she paused, and stooping began a lengthy process of adjusting her shoelace. Though a noisy admiration party was in full swing around the triumphant sophomore squad, she determined to run no chance of being set down as an eavesdropper. After a fashion Marian Seaton was clever, but her cleverness was never put to good use.

She could make little of Adrienne's vehe-

ment sputtering, half-English, half-French. Ah! Now it was Judith's clear tones that came to her ears.

"I have said right along that Miss Hurley has no right to keep Alicia Reynolds on the team." In her resentment Judith's voice rose. "It is not fair to the rest of us. I don't like Marian Seaton, but I must say she is a splendid player. So you see I'm not prejudiced. For the good of the team we ought to have Jane. She is a wonder. Barbara says she is the best player on the sub-team and ought to be on the official team."

"Then *I* shall try to have her placed there," broke in Christine with sharp decision. "As captain I think I ought to have some right, at least, to say what shall be done. I shall see Miss Hurley——"

But Marian waited to hear no more. She also was resolved to see Miss Hurley, and at once. There was another point, too, on which she had made up her mind, and it related intimately to Jane Allen.

CHAPTER XXIV

TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE

BUT while three justly incensed girls were working for the good of the team and Jane's happiness, a fourth equally enraged young woman was unburdening herself to Roberta Hurley. Her flow of expostulation must have been attended with some degree of success. When she left the gymnasium in company with the senior manager, her pale blue eyes were agleam with malicious triumph.

On the next afternoon Christine Ellis sought Miss Hurley and put forth a straightforward plea in the name of the freshmen. But she met with a brusque reception. Coolly decisive, the senior manager delivered her ultimatum. Alicia Reynolds must remain on the team. Christine promptly lost her temper and all but accused

Miss Hurley of favoritism. The vexed captain might as well have beaten her head against a stone wall. The haughty manager merely treated her as though she were an unruly child and snubbed her in dignified fashion.

"Were I as unfair as you appear to think me, I might take into consideration your decided impertinence, Miss Ellis, and make a change in the team that would hardly be to your liking," was Miss Hurley's significant comment.

"If you mean me, you may ask for my resignation whenever you choose," retorted Christine, and marched off with her head held high. She was too greatly exasperated to care whether or not she remained on the team. She had fully expected that Miss Hurley would be disinclined to interfere, but she had not looked for such flat opposition. She reflected resentfully that "straws" indicated plainly which way the wind blew. Afterward, in recounting the unsatisfactory interview to Judith and Adrienne, the three unanimously agreed that it would be best to say nothing about it to Jane. What she did not know would not trouble her. To confess to her their failure to advance her interests would tend to make her unhappy.

Stung by the memory of their recent defeat,

the freshman team practiced harder than ever. Adrienne, Judith and Christine spurred themselves on to fresh effort with intent to overcome the handicap that menaced future victory. Marian Seaton did brilliant work for the same reason. Privately she commenced to nag Alicia Reynolds about her playing, reminding her sharply that she must keep up with the others, for fear of incurring the criticism of the freshman class. Basket-ball excitement had risen to fever heat in both classes since the playing of the second game of the contest. The third game, which was to come off directly after the Easter vacation, was now a matter of compelling interest to both organizations.

Among the freshmen, the sub-team was also playing its way to heights of importance. Practice went on to the tune of noisy applause when a particularly clever throw to basket was made. There were always plenty of spectators to line the gymnasium walls, for the sophomores were not above dropping in on the busy scene to watch and comment on the work of their team's opponents.

Jane Allen's spirited playing was frequently commended. More than one girl whispered to her neighbor that "Miss Allen ought to be on

the regular team." It was a pity that she had not entered the try-out held at the beginning of the season. Occasionally these pleasant comments reached Jane's ears, inspiring her to greater effort. As boisterous March bullied and blustered out his remaining days, she grew more than ever in love with basket-ball. She was already an expert player and looked hopefully forward toward trying next year for a place on the sophomore squad.

It was while she was thus engaged in wholeheartedly doing her best on the team that a sinister cloud appeared on the blue of her happiness. It lacked a little more than a week until the beginning of the Easter vacation and the rival squads were utilizing every spare moment in which to perfect their playing. Almost at the close of an hour of spirited contest between the sub and the regular teams, something occurred to which at the time Jane paid no special attention. During a headlong scramble for the ball, which necessitated general jostling, Alicia Reynolds stumbled and fell. Swept onward in the rush, Jane gave no heed to the fallen player. Accidents of that nature were a part of the game. Once down, the unfortunate one made it her business to bob up promptly. Had Judith fallen, it

would have made no difference to Jane. At such a time personal feelings were non est.

Practice over, Jane was about to cross the floor to the dressing room when her glance came to rest on a group of girls of whom Alicia Reynolds was the center. Her eyes flashed stormily as she noted that they were staring at her in an anything but pleasant fashion. She quickly looked away. Nevertheless in that brief instant she had observed that Marian Seaton, Edith Hammond and Roberta Hurley were of the group. The next moment Jane rebuked herself sharply for allowing such a thing to disturb her, and resolutely dismissed it from her thoughts.

Next day at practice she had quite forgotten it. She even smiled a trifle grimly when, during the progress of the play, Alicia lurched heavily against her and through her own clumsiness barely missed falling again. Several times that afternoon fate seemed determined that she and Alicia should run afoul of each other. To cap the climax, before practice was over Jane and Marian Seaton bumped their heads smartly together, causing the latter to exclaim angrily. Again on leaving the floor she noticed the same hostile group of yesterday watching her. This time Marian was doing all the talking. Jane

wondered if Marian was airing the grievance of her bumped head for their benefit.

On the third day she awoke to the fact that she was receiving decidedly rough treatment from both Marian and Alicia. Moreover, they seemed perpetually in her path. Alicia fell down twice. The second time she landed at Jane's very feet and Jane narrowly avoided stepping on her. She could have sworn that three different times Marian deliberately crashed against her, rebounding with unnecessary violence. To an onlooker it would appear that Jane was at fault. This, however, did not then occur to Jane. Instead she was possessed of the idea that the two girls were bent on annoying her with intent to arouse her to an open display of temper. Merely disgusted, she met these furtive attacks with an impassivity she was far from feeling. So far as she was concerned her tormentors should never know that she even suspected them of treachery.

Jane's consternation and surprise were unbounded when, on the following morning, she found a note from Roberta Hurley in the Hall bulletin board, requesting her resignation from the practice team. The note was couched in the most formal terms, and contained no reason for

the request. Jane's alert faculties instantly set to work to supply the omission. Her mind reverting to the disagreeable incidents that had attended her practice of the past few days, she now understood. Marian and Alicia had deliberately purposed the frequent collisions and mishaps which she had regarded as accidental, with intent to make her appear as an unnecessarily rough and tricky player. On the day that Alicia had taken that first tumble she had begun the campaign. That accounted for the hostile eyes which had afterward been directed toward her. Once the seed of suspicion had been sown in such fertile soil, it had instantly sprouted. Assiduous cultivation had insured its lightning growth.

Jane's first impulse was to hurry upstairs to tell Judith. Then she remembered that her roommate had already left the Hall. As she continued to stare at the cruel lines she felt suddenly suffocated by her narrow surroundings. She was assailed by an impetuous desire to mount Firefly and ride away from it all. It was the first day of April, but this was no hoax of All Fool's Day. It was stark, bitter fact. From her windows that morning the perfect blue of a spring sky had awakened in her the longing to play truant. Now she craved the balm of sun, sky and soft breezes

as an antidote for this avalanche of humiliation that had so unexpectedly descended.

Jane dashed up the stairs to her room. Fifteen minutes afterward she was on her way to the stable. Once on Firefly's trusty back, she galloped furiously away from the college and through the staid streets of the sleepy town, bent only on putting distance between herself and Wellington.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when she rode away. It was five o'clock in the afternoon when she went slowly up the steps of the Hall. All that day Firefly, sturdy and untiring, had borne her faithfully wherever she had willed him to go. A wayside hostelry many miles from Wellington had furnished refreshment for both girl and horse. During those long sunny hours Jane had been busily thinking. Her whole mind now centered on reprisal. She would publicly confront Marian and Alicia and demand justice. If they refused to retract their unfair accusations against her, she would carry her grievance higher. Miss Rutledge would sift matters to the bottom. She, at least, was absolutely impartial and fair-minded.

The longer Jane considered her plan the better it pleased her. Hitherto she had endured in

silence. Now the time had come to speak. Once and for all she would end this hateful persecution. As she had missed practice that afternoon, Miss Hurley would naturally take it for granted that she was guilty of the crimes laid at her door. By this time her own friends must have learned what had happened. No doubt a girl of Miss Hurley's choosing had played on the sub-team in her place.

"I might have known it!" were Judith's first words. A single glance at the tall figure in riding clothes revealed to her in what fashion Jane had spent the day.

"You've heard, I suppose." Jane stared darkly at Judith, her crop beating a nervous tattoo on her riding boot. "Have I been branded as a disgrace to the team?"

"Heard?" Judith's voice soared to heights of indignation. "I've heard nothing else. It was outrageous in Miss Hurley to lend herself to such trickery. As for Marian Seaton and that cowardly Alicia Reynolds! It makes me sick to think of them. I don't blame you for cutting your classes and running away! I suppose our dear manager sent you a note?"

"Yes. Would you like to see it?" Jane drew the note from a pocket of her riding coat and

bravely handed it to Judith. She had read it so many times that day she knew it by heart.

"It's the limit!" In her disgust Judith found in slang only the force to express her feelings. "Never mind. Here is a note to match it. Read that!"

She thrust the note at Jane, whose eyes traveled unbelievingly over these pertinent lines:

> "We, the undersigned, by reason of the unfair treatment accorded to Jane Allen of the substitute team, do hereby not only make protest against the same, but cheerfully resign our various positions on the regular and substitute teams."

Seven bold signatures followed this amazing declaration of independence.

"Why!" stammered Jane. "Why——"

Here was justification in full force. The resignation of the seven girls meant the downfall of freshman basket-ball for that year at least. The great game would never be played. It would be too late for an inexperienced team to dream of facing the sophomores. Marian and Alicia had plotted to force her from the sub-team. But in her hour of need friends had loy-

ally risen to her standard. Her enemies had cast a boomerang, little dreaming how signally it would strike home. There was now no need for her to go to Miss Rutledge. Fate had already decreed otherwise.

"What do you think of *that?*" Judith's triumphant inflection brought Jane out of her brown study. "Of course it's hard on the freshmen. They have certainly been loyal fans. Still, we can't stand by and let Alicia and Marian Seaton and Miss Hurley have their own way. It's a poor rule that won't work both ways, you know."

CHAPTER XXV

THE GREAT GAME

ON Saturday afternoon the gymnasium of Wellington College presented a scene of unusual activity. Due to the untiring efforts of the sophomores and freshmen it was liberally decorated with their respective colors. As nearly all of the students had elected to become ardent fans, huge rosettes and streamers, sophomore wistaria and white, or freshman green and gold, ornamented their loyal persons.

Long before the game began the spectators were in evidence. They crowded the gallery and filled the roped-in portion of the playing floor to the last inch of space. On one side of the gallery was the freshman glee club, eager and ready to burst into inspiring song, while opposite them were their sophomore sisters who had been detailed for a similar service to their team.

As usual the front seats of the gallery had been reserved for the faculty. President Blakesly, Miss Rutledge, Miss Howard, in short, nearly all of the members of the faculty had chosen to honor the occasion with their presence. All this tended to point to the importance of the contest about to take place, and both classes were jubilant by reason of such distinguished attendance.

The game was to be called at two-fifteen. Precisely at two o'clock the freshmen choirsters rose in their places and burst into the vocal admonition:

"Our freshmen, 'tis of thee
We sing most loyally;
Team of our pride!
To-day thy valor show,
The ball to basket throw,
Whitewash the haughty foe;
Score for our side."

They had hardly finished when the sophomore singers responded with a defiant challenge to the tune of "Forsaken."

"We'll beat them, we'll beat them!
We'll shatter their dream
Of stealing the pennant

Away from our team.
Oh, let them be wary
And shake in their shoes!
The sophomores must conquer;
The freshmen must lose!"

The freshmen, however, had a ready and tuneful retort to this, but before they had finished singing it the warning whistle of the referee signaled to them to desist. At a second blast of the whistle a slender, golden-haired figure in a Greek gown of green, bordered with gold, issued from the freshman dressing room. On her head was a gilt crown, while in her hands she bore a golden lyre, which freshman ingenuity had fashioned with difficulty of pasteboard and string, and painstakingly gilded. Both crown and lyre modestly hinted at undoubted victory.

At the same moment a full-fledged Indian chief burst into view from the sophomore dressing room. In his belt was an enormous purple tomahawk, of the proportions of a battle-axe, while dangling carelessly from his shoulder was a string of what perilously resembled five scalps. He carried a huge purple and white banner and waved it as he walked, with the air of a conqueror.

"Ladies and gentlemen," announced the golden-haired girl. "We have with us this afternoon the winning freshmen. To the brave belongs the victory!"

As she finished her speech, partially drowned by tumultuous applause, the green and gold players pattered across the floor, to the tune of further acclamation.

"Big sophomore chief!" sonorously intoned the distinguished representative of the sophomores, waving his banner and brandishing his tomahawk at the same time.

He also received his quota of applause. The two mascots then bowed low and made a dignified march off the floor.

"Tr-ill, tr-ill!" shrieked the faithful whistle, and the two teams sprang into position for the toss up.

To Jane Allen, as she stood ready for action, it was the supreme moment of her life. The gay decorations, the clamoring audience, the opening ceremony of introduction by the mascots, thrilled her to the core. Most wonderful of all, she was at last a part of that which she had so often vainly dreamed.

The sophomores won the toss-up and encouraged by the jubilant shouts of their fans pro-

ceeded to show the freshmen a few things about basket-ball. Their opponents, however, were of the opinion that they could do better themselves, and entered the fray with an energy and speed that kept their elder sisters hustling. With Alicia Reynolds off the squad and Jane on, they made a most formidible combination and scored repeatedly.

On learning of the change Alicia had willed, Marian Seaton's anger was not pleasant to witness. On returning to the Hall just before half-past ten of the previous evening, she and Maizie Gilbert had learned of the accident. Early Saturday morning she had sought Alicia in the hope that the latter might be able to take her place on the team. When Alicia had calmly apprised her of the news that Jane Allen was to replace her, Marian had flown into a rage and expressed her opinion of Alicia in scathing terms. Determined from now on to stand by her colors, Alicia had declared herself once and for all, thus ending the intimacy between the two girls.

Marian had then sought Roberta Hurley, but found that she had already written Jane the fatal note, the sending of which Marian had hoped to be in time to prevent. Miss Hurley had reluctantly admitted that it was too bad, but had

lamely explained that to refuse Alicia's request after what had happened would bring censure down upon her own head. So Marian had been obliged to retire in wrathful defeat.

In the dressing room she had refused to notice any of her teammates. This troubled them little. If only Marian would play in her usual form, they cared nothing for her personal opinion of them.

As the game proceeded it was noted with relief by at least three of them that Marian intended to do her best so far as her work on the floor went. Jane, however, was too much occupied with her own business to remember Marian's personal existence. She was in her glory, and her clever footwork, swift, lithe movements and quick, catlike springs won for her that day a lasting reputation as a star player.

At the end of the first half the freshmen were several points ahead. From the beginning of the second half they kept the lead and went on piling up their score. The sophomores worked with desperate energy and made some fine plays. Still they lost several points on fouls and once or twice their passing was not up to their usual standard. The amazing manner in which their opponents signaled and carried out their plays tended to

unnerve them. They did not do as well in the last half as in the first, and several minutes before the final whistle blew they knew that defeat was imminent.

To Jane fell the star play of the afternoon: a long overhand throw to basket. Coming as it did just before the end of the game, it awoke a perfect fury of acclamation and added one more bit of glory to the freshman score. Jane Allen had indeed proved her right to play on the team.

When the result of the game was announced, 18-10 in favor of the freshmen, there came another wild outburst which good-natured President Blakesly made no effort to suppress.

Jane found herself the center of an admiring throng from which she broke away with difficulty. She had done her work and done it well, but now that the game was over and the freshmen had won she was anxious to be off on an errand of her own. She had promised to visit Alicia and give her an account of the game.

" 'The sophomores must conquer;
The freshmen must lose,' "

quoted Judith derisively, as the four friends gathered in the dressing room. Marian Seaton

had not put in an appearance as yet. She was purposely loitering in the gymnasium until the quartette she disliked had taken their departure.

"Yes; it looks like it now, doesn't it?" laughed Christine Ellis. "It may sound conceited, but, girls, I never saw a team work together so beautifully as ours played to-day. As for Jane, she is the original basket-ball artist."

"I was merely lucky to-day," deprecated Jane. "Things seemed to come my way. Another time I might disgrace you."

"I only hope there *will* be 'another time' next year," declared Judith. "Then we shall be able to prove to you that luck had nothing to do with your playing. I envy you that last throw to basket."

"Ah, yes," sighed Adrienne, "we are of a truth green-eyed with jealousy. Is it not sad that we shall play the splendid basket-ball no more this year? It makes heartache." She laid a small hand dramatically over her heart.

"It certainly does," agreed Christine practically. "All we can do is to try for the team next year. Unless some of the subs outplay us at the try-out, we ought to make it."

"I hope——" began Judith, then stopped.

"You needn't say it," smiled Christine. "We

understand. Personally, so do I. From the standpoint of basket-ball, she's a clever player. That's all I have to say on the subject."

No one else saw fit to comment upon Marian Seaton. In the hour of victory they were disposed to be charitable.

"You are cordially invited to attend a spread this evening at the home of the Misses Stearns and Allen," invited Judith, as a little later the four girls halted at the parting of their ways for a moment's further chat.

"I have a brilliant idea." Jane had had very little to say until she made this sudden remark. Her mind was on a white-faced girl who lay quietly in her room awaiting the return of strength.

"Name it," said Christine.

"Why not give the spread for Alicia, and in her room? She would like it, I am sure, and I feel as though we owed it to her." Jane spoke with deep seriousness.

Her proposal rather electrified her friends. Nevertheless they loyally rose to it.

"That is most sweet in you, Jane," approved Adrienne. "It is very horrible to be shut in the room and lie on the couch when the spring is here and all is thus beautiful outdoors. Alicia I

do not know very well, and that little I have not liked, but the accident has brought the reform."

"It was splendid in her to do what she did for me. I like her very much." Jane emphasized the last sentence.

"All those in favor of Jane's plan say 'Aye,'" stated Judith. "That means you and Adrienne, Christine."

"Aye, aye," came the response, and the four separated, as Adrienne had an errand to do in town and Christine was bound for Argyle Hall.

"Jane Allen, do you realize that the year is almost over?" asked Judith as they strolled across the campus. "In less than two months we'll be homeward bound."

"I know it." Jane's heart beat a little faster at the words, "homeward bound." Looking back on the beginning of her college year, she wondered at the swift passage of time. Yes, she would soon be speeding West to her father and dear old Capitan. Yet into her joy crept a tinge of regret. After all, she would be a little sorry to leave Wellington.

THE END

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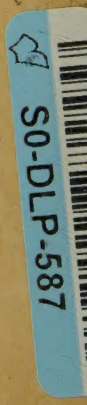
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